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THE

POETICAL WORKS

OF

52837

JAMES MONTGOMERY.

VOL. IV.

THE PELICAN ISLAND,

AND

OTHER POEMS.

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PREFACE.

THE subject of "The Pelican Island" was suggested by a passage in Captain Flinders's Voyage to Terra Australis. Describing one of those numerous gulfs which indent the coast of New Holland, and are thickly spotted with small islands, he says: — "Upon two of these we found many young Pelicans unable to fly. Flocks of the old birds were sitting upon the beaches of the lagoon, and it appeared that the islands were their breeding places; not only so, but, from the number of skeletons and bones there scattered, it should seem that for ages these had been selected for the closing scene of their existence. Certainly, none more likely to be free from disturbance of every kind could

have been chosen, than these islets of a hidden lagoon of an uninhabited island [called by Captain F. Kangaroo Island], situate upon an unknown coast, near the antipodes of Europe; nor can any thing be more consonant to their feelings, if Pelicans have any, than quietly to resign their breath, surrounded by their progeny, and in the same spot where they first drew it." — Captain Flinders was particularly struck with the appearance of one of these islands, on the surface of which were scattered the relics of a great number of trees, prostrated by some tremendous storm, or, as he conjectured, self-ignited by the friction of dead branches in a strong wind. This fact (adopting the former hypothesis) suggested the catastrophe described at the close of the third Canto of the Poem.

Having determined not to encumber his volume with notes, which might plausibly have been done to a great extent, — and believing, that those readers, who shall be sufficiently interested in the poem to desire further knowledge

of the subjects progressively reviewed in it, may readily satisfy themselves from popular books of voyages, and natural history, — the Author will merely offer, in this place, an illustration of the nature of coral reefs, extracted from Captain Basil Hall's Voyage to the Island of Loo Choo, in the Chinese Sea.

" The examination of a coral reef during the different stages of one tide, is particularly interesting. When the tide has left it for some time it becomes dry, and appears to be a compact rock, exceedingly hard and ragged; but as the tide rises, and the waves begin to wash over it, the coral worms protrude themselves from holes which before were invisible. These animals are of a great variety of shapes and sizes, and in such prodigious numbers, that, in a short time, the whole surface of the rock appears to be alive and in motion. The most common worm is in the form of a star, with arms from four to six inches long, which are moved about with a rapid motion in all directions, probably to catch food. Others are so

sluggish, that they may be mistaken for pieces of the rock, and are generally of a dark colour, and from four to five inches long, and two or three round. When the coral is broken about high-water mark, it is a solid hard stone; but if any part of it be detached at a spot which the tide reaches every day, it is found to be full of worms of different lengths and colours, some being as fine as a thread and several feet long, of a bright yellow, and sometimes of a blue colour; others resemble snails, and some are not unlike lobsters in shape, but soft, and not above two inches long.

" The growth of coral appears to cease when the worm is no longer exposed to the washing of the sea. Thus a reef rises in the form of a cauliflower, till its top has gained the level of the highest tides, above which the worm has no power to advance, and the reef of course no longer extends itself upwards. The other parts in succession reach the surface, and there stop, forming in time a level field with steep sides all round. The reef, however, continually increases,

and being prevented from growing higher, extends itself laterally in all directions. But the growth being as rapid at the upper edge as it is lower down, the steepness of the face of the reef is still preserved. These are the circumstances which render coral reefs so dangerous in navigation; for, in the first place, they are seldom seen above the water; and, in the next, their sides are so steep, that a ship's bow may strike against the rock before any change of soundings has given warning of the danger."

With these brief quotations to explain the two principal circumstances on which the poem is founded, the Author abandons his "Pelican Island" to the judgment of the public, having no hope to conciliate favour by apology or vindication, where he has painfully felt that both would be necessary, if the success or failure of his work did not wholly depend on the manner in which it has been executed. He only requests the reader to bear in mind, that the narrative is supposed to be delivered by the imaginary being who witnesses the series of

events, *after* the whole has happened, and who therefore describes them in such language, and with such illustrations, as the knowledge which he *then* possessed enabled him to use, whether he be identified with the Author, or (if the latter will so far condescend) with the reader himself, as spectator, actor, thinker, in this masquerade of

" Truth severe by fairy-fiction drest."

Sheffield, July 19. 1827.

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THE

PELICAN ISLAND.

CANTO FIRST.

METHOUGHT I lived through ages, and beheld
Their generations pass so swiftly by me,
That years were moments in their flight, and hours
The scenes of crowded centuries reveal'd;
While Time, Life, Death, the world's great actors, wrought
New and amazing changes: — these I sing.

Sky, sun, and sea were all the universe;
The sky, one blue, interminable arch,

Without a breeze, a wing, a cloud; the sun
Sole in the firmament, but in the deep
Redoubled; where the circle of the sea,
Invisible with calmness, seem'd to lie
Within the hollow of a lower heaven.

I was a Spirit in the midst of these,
All eye, ear, thought; existence was enjoyment;
Light was an element of life, and air
The clothing of my incorporeal form, —
A form impalpable to mortal touch,
And volatile as fragrance from the flower,
Or music in the woodlands. What the soul
Can make itself at pleasure, that I was;
A child in feeling and imagination,
Learning new lessons still, as Nature wrought
Her wonders in my presence. All I saw,
(Like Adam when he walk'd in Paradise,)
I knew and named by secret intuition.
Actor, spectator, sufferer, each in turn,

I ranged, explored, reflected. Now I sail'd,
And now I soar'd; anon expanding, seem'd
Diffused into immensity, yet bound
Within a space too narrow for desire;
The mind, the mind perpetual themes must task,
Perpetual power impel, and hope allure.
I and the silent sun were here alone,
But not companions; high and bright he held
His course; I gazed with admiration on him,—
There all communion ended; and I sigh'd,
In loneliness unutterable sigh'd,
To feel myself a wanderer without aim,
An exile amidst splendid desolation,
A prisoner with infinity surrounded.

The sun descended, dipp'd, and disappear'd;
Then sky and sea were all the universe,
And I the only being in existence!
So thought I, and the thought, like ice and fire,

Went freezing, burning, withering, thrilling through
me.
Annihilation then had been deliverance,
While that eternity of solitude
Lay on my heart, hard struggling to break free,
As from a dream, when mountains press the sleeper.

Darkness, meanwhile, disguised in twilight, crept
O'er air and ocean; drearier gloom involved
My fainting senses, till a sudden ray
Of pensile lustre sparkled from the west;
I flew to meet it, but drew never nearer,
While, vanishing and re-appearing oft,
At length it trembled out into a star.
My soul revived, and could I then have wept,
(Methought I did) with tears of fond delight,
How had I hail'd the gentle apparition,
As second life to me; so sweetly welcome
The faintest semblance of society,
Though but a point to rest the eye upon,

To him who hath been utterly bereaved!
— Star after star, from some unseen abyss,
Came through the sky, like thoughts into the mind,
We know not whence; till all the firmament
Was throng'd with constellations, and the sea
Strown with their images. Amidst a sphere
Of twinkling lights, like living eyes, that look'd
At once on me from every side, I stood,
(Motion and rest with me were mere volition,)
Myself perhaps a star among the rest!
But here again I found no fellowship;
Sight could not reach, nor keenest thought conceive
Their nature or their offices. To me
They were but what they seem'd, and yet I felt
They must be more; the mind hath no horizon,
It looks beyond the eye, and seeks for mind
In all it sees, or all it sees o'erruling.

Low in the east, ere long, the morning dawn
Shot upward, onward, and around the pole,

With arrowy glimpses traversing the shade.
Night's train, as they had kindled one by one,
Now one by one withdrew, reversing order,
Where those that came the latest, earliest went:
Day rose triumphant, and again to me
Sky, sun, and sea were all the universe;
But ah! the glory had departed, and I long'd
For some untried vicissitude: — it came.

A breeze sprang up, and with careering wing
Play'd like an unseen being on the water.
Slowly from slumber 'woke the unwilling main,
Curling and murmuring, till the infant waves
Leap'd on his lap, and laugh'd in air and sunshine:
Then all was bright and beautiful emotion,
And sweet accordance of susurrant sounds,
I felt the gay delirium of the scene;
I felt the breeze and billow chase each other,
Like bounding pulses in my human veins:

For, though impassive to the elements,
The form I wore was exquisitely tuned
To Nature's sympathies; joy, fear, hope, sorrow,
(As though I yet were in the body) moved,
Elated, shook, or tranquillized my soul.

Thus pass'd the day: night follow'd, deck'd with stars
Innumerable, and the pale new moon,
Beneath her feet, a slight inverted crescent,
Soon disappearing.

Time flew on, and brought
Alternate morn and eve. The sun, the stars,
The moon through all her phases, waxing, waning,
The planets seeking rest, and finding none,
— These were the only objects in mine eye,
The constant burthen of my thoughts, perplex'd
With vain conjectures why they were created.

Once, at high noon, amidst a sultry calm,
Looking around for comfort, I descried,
Far on the green horizon's utmost verge,
A wreath of cloud; to me a glad discovery,
For each new image sprang a new idea,
The germ of thoughts to come, that could not die.
The little vapour rapidly expanded,
Lowering and thickening till it hid the sun,
And threw a starless night upon the sea.
Eagerly, tremblingly, I watch'd the end.
Faint gleam'd the lightning, follow'd by no peal;
Dreary and hollow moans foretold a gale;
Nor long the issue tarried; then the wind,
Unprison'd, blew its trumpet loud and shrill;
Out flash'd the lightnings gloriously; the rain
Came down like music, and the full-toned thunder
Roll'd in grand harmony throughout high heaven:
Till ocean, breaking from his black supineness,
Drown'd in his own stupendous uproar all
The voices of the storm beside; meanwhile

A war of mountains raged upon his surface;
Mountains each other swallowing, and again
New Alps and Andes, from unfathom'd valleys
Upstarting, join'd the battle; like those sons
Of earth, — giants, rebounding as new-born
From every fall on their unwearied mother.
I glow'd with all the rapture of the strife:
Beneath was one wild whirl of foaming surges;
Above the array of lightnings, like the swords
Of cherubim, wide brandish'd, to repel
Aggression from heaven's gates; their flaming strokes
Quench'd momentarily in the vast abyss.

The voice of Him who walks upon the wind,
And sets his throne upon the floods, rebuked
The headlong tempest in its mid-career,
And turn'd its horrors to magnificence.
The evening sun broke through the embattled clouds,
And threw round sky and sea, as by enchantment,

A radiant girdle, binding them to peace,
In the full rainbow's harmony of beams;
No brilliant fragment, but one sevenfold circle,
That spann'd the horizon, meted out the heavens,
And underarch'd the ocean. 'Twas a scene,
That left itself for ever on my mind.

Night, silent, cool, transparent, crown'd the day;
The sky receded further into space,
The stars came lower down to meet the eye,
Till the whole hemisphere, alive with light,
Twinkled from east to west by one consent.
The constellations round the arctic pole,
That never set to us, here scarcely rose,
But in their stead, Orion through the north
Pursued the Pleiads; Sirius, with his keen,
Quick scintillations, in the zenith reign'd.
The south unveil'd its glories;—there, the Wolf,
With eyes of lightning, watch'd the Centaur's spear;
Through the clear hyaline, the Ship of Heaven

Came sailing from eternity; the Dove,
On silver pinions, wing'd her peaceful way;
There, at the footstool of Jehovah's throne,
The Altar, kindled from His presence, blazed;
There, too, all else excelling, meekly shone
The Cross, the symbol of redeeming love:
The Heavens declared the glory of the Lord,
The firmament display'd his handy-work.

With scarce inferior lustre gleam'd the sea,
Whose waves were spangled with phosphoric fire,
As though the lightnings there had spent their shafts,
And left the fragments glittering on the field.

Next morn, in mockery of a storm, the breeze
And waters skirmish'd; bubble-armies fought
Millions of battles on the crested surges,
And where they fell, all cover'd with their glory,
Traced, in white foam on the cerulean main,
Paths, like the milky-way among the stars.

Charm'd with the spectacle, yet deeply touch'd
With a forlorn and not untender feeling —
" Why," said my thoughts within me, "why this waste
Of loveliness and grandeur unenjoy'd?
Is there no life throughout this fair existence?
Sky, sun, and sea, the moon, the stars, the clouds,
Wind, lightning, thunder, are but ministers;
They know not what they are, nor what they do:
O for the beings for whom these were made!"

Light as a flake of foam upon the wind,
Keel upward from the deep emerged a shell,
Shaped like the moon ere half her horn is fill'd;
Fraught with young life, it righted as it rose,
And moved at will along the yielding water.
The native pilot of this little bark
Put out a tier of oars on either side,
Spread to the wafting breeze a two-fold sail,
And mounted up and glided down the billow
In happy freedom, pleased to feel the air,

And wander in the luxury of light.
Worth all the dead creation, in that hour,
To me appear'd this lonely Nautilus,
My fellow-being, like myself *alive.*
Entranced in contemplation vague yet sweet,
I watch'd its vagrant course and rippling wake,
Till I forgot the sun amidst the heavens.

It closed, sunk, dwindled to a point, then nothing;
While the last bubble crown'd the dimpling eddy,
Through which mine eye still giddily pursued it,
A joyous creature vaulted through the air, —
The aspiring fish that fain would be a bird,
On long light wings, that flung a diamond shower
Of dew-drops round its evanescent form,
Sprang into light, and instantly descended.
Ere I could greet the stranger as a friend,
Or mourn his quick departure, — on the surge,
A shoal of Dolphins, tumbling in wild glee,
Glow'd with such orient tints, they might have been

The rainbow's offspring, when it met the ocean
In that resplendent vision I had seen.
While yet in ecstasy I hung o'er these,
With every motion pouring out fresh beauties,
As though the conscious colours came and went
At pleasure, glorying in their subtle changes, —
Enormous o'er the flood, Leviathan
Look'd forth, and from his roaring nostrils sent
Two fountains to the sky, then plunged amain
In headlong pastime through the closing gulf.

These were but preludes to the revelry
That reign'd at sunset: then the deep let loose
Its blithe adventurers to sport at large,
As kindly instinct taught them; buoyant shells,
On stormless voyages, in fleets or single,
Wherried their tiny mariners; aloof,
On wing-like fins, in bow-and-arrow figures,
The flying fishes darted to and fro;
While spouting Whales projected wat'ry columns,

That turned to arches at their height, and seem'd
The skeletons of crystal palaces,
Built on the blue expanse, then perishing,
Frail as the element which they were made of:
Dolphins, in gambols, lent the lucid brine
Hues richer than the canopy of eve,
That overhung the scene with gorgeous clouds,
Decaying into gloom more beautiful
Than the sun's golden liveries which they lost:
Till light that hides, and darkness that reveals
The stars,— exchanging guard, like sentinels
Of day and night, — transform'd the face of nature:
Above was wakefulness, silence around,
Beneath, repose, — repose that reach'd even me.
Power, will, sensation, memory, fail'd in turn;
My very essence seem'd to pass away,
Like a thin cloud that melts across the moon,
Lost in the blue immensity of heaven.

THE

PELICAN ISLAND.

CANTO SECOND.

LIFE's intermitting pulse again went on:
I woke amidst the beauty of a morn,
That shone as bright within me as around.
The presence-chamber of the soul was full
Of flitting images and rapturous thoughts;
For eye and mind were open'd to explore
The secrets of the abyss erewhile conceal'd.
The floor of ocean, never trod by man,
Was visible to me as heaven's round roof,
Which man hath never touch'd; the multitude

Of living things, in that new hemisphere,
Gleam'd out of darkness, like the stars at midnight,
When moon nor clouds, with light or shade, obscure
them.
For, as in hollows of the tide-worn reef,
Left at low water glistening in the sun,
Pellucid pools and rocks in miniature,
With their small fry of fishes, crusted shells,
Rich mosses, tree-like sea-weed, sparkling pebbles,
Enchant the eye, and tempt the eager hand
To violate the fairy paradise,
—So to my view the deep disclosed its wonders.

In the free element beneath me swam,
Flounder'd, and dived, in play, in chase, in battle,
Fishes of every colour, form, and kind,
(Strange forms, resplendent colours, kinds unnum-
ber'd,)
Which language cannot paint, and mariner
Hath never seen; from dread Leviathan

To insect-millions peopling every wave;
And nameless tribes, half-plant, half-animal,
Rooted and slumbering through a dream of life.
The livelier inmates to the surface sprang,
To taste the freshness of heaven's breath, and feel
That light is pleasant, and the sunbeam warm.
Most in the middle region sought their prey,
Safety, or pastime; solitary some,
And some in pairs affectionately join'd;
Others in shoals immense, like floating islands,
Led by mysterious instinct through that waste
And trackless region, though on every side
Assaulted by voracious enemies,
— Whales, sharks, and monsters, arm'd in front or jaw,
With swords, saws, spiral horns, or hooked fangs.
While ravening Death of slaughter ne'er grew weary,
Life multiplied the immortal meal as fast.
War, reckless, universal war, prevail'd;
All were devourers, all in turn devour'd;

Yet every unit in the uncounted sum
Of victims had its share of bliss, its pang,
And but a pang, of dissolution; each
Was happy till its moment came, and then
Its first, last suffering, unforeseen, unfear'd,
Closed, with one struggle, pain and life for ever.
So He ordain'd, whose way is in the sea,
His path amidst great waters, and his steps
Unknown; — whose judgments are a mighty deep,
Where plummet of Archangel's intellect
Could never yet find soundings, but from age
To age let down, drawn up, then thrown again,
With lengthen'd line and added weight, still fails;
And still the cry in Heaven is, " O the depth!"

Thus, while bewilder'd with delight I gazed
On life in every shape it here assumed,
Congenial feeling made me follow it,
And try to be whatever I beheld:
By mental transmigration thus I pass'd

Through many a body, and in each assay'd
New instincts, powers, enjoyments, death itself;
Till, weary with the fanciful pursuit,
I started from that idle reverie.
Then grew my heart more desolate than ever;
Here had I found the beings which I sought,
— Beings for whom the universe was made,
Yet none of kindred with myself. In vain
I strove to waken sympathy in breasts
Cold as the element in which they moved,
And inaccessible to fellowship
With me, as sun and stars, as winds and vapours:
Sense had they, but no more; mind was not there.
They roam'd, they fed, they slept, they died, and left
Race after race, to roam, feed, sleep, then die,
And leave their like through endless generations;
— Incessant change of actors, none of scene,
Through all that boundless theatre of strife!
Shrinking into myself again, I cried,
In bitter disappointment, — "Is this all?"

I sent a glance at random from the cloud,
In which I then lay floating through mid-heaven,
To ocean's innermost recess; — when lo!
Another seal of Nature's book was open'd,
Which held transported thought so deep entranced,
That Time, though borne through mightiest revolutions,
Seem'd, like the earth in motion, to stand still.
The works of ages grew beneath mine eye;
As rapid intellect calls up events,
Combines, compresses, moulds them, with such power,
That, in a little page of memory,
An empire's annals lie, — a nation's fortunes
Pass in review, as motes through sunbeams pass,
Glistening and vanishing in quick succession,
Yet each distinct as though there were but one;
— So thrice a thousand years, with all their issues,
Hurried before me, through a gleam of Time,
Between the clouds of two eternities, —
That whence they came, and that to which they tended.

Immeasurable continents beneath
The expanse of animated waters lay,
Not strown, — as I have *since* discern'd the tracks
Of voyagers, — with shipwrecks and their spoils,
The wealth of merchants, the artillery
Of war, the chains of captives, and the gems,
That glow'd upon the brow of beauty; crowns
Of monarchs, swords of heroes, anchors lost,
That never had let go their hold in storms;
Helms, sunk in port, that steer'd adventurous barks
Round the wide world; bones of dead men, that made
A hidden Golgotha where they had fallen,
Unseen, unsepulchred, but not unwept
By lover, friend, relation, far away,
Long waiting their return to home and country,
And going down into their fathers' graves
With their grey hairs or youthful locks in sorrow,
To meet no more till seas give up their dead:
Some too—ay thousands—whom none living mourn'd,

None miss'd, — waifs in the universe, the last
Lorn links of kindred chains for ever sunder'd.

Not such the spectacle I now survey'd:
No broken hearts lay here; no aching heads,
For whose vast schemes the world was once too small,
And life too short, in Death's dark lap found rest
Beneath the unresting wave; — but skeletons
Of Whales and Krakens here and there were scatter'd,
The prey when dead of tribes, their prey when living:
And, seen by glimpses, but awakening thoughts
Too sad for utterance, — relics huge and strange
Of the old world that perish'd by the flood,
Kept under chains of darkness till the judgment.
— Save these, lay ocean's bed, as from the hand
Of its Creator, hollow'd and prepared
For his unfathomable counsels there,
To work slow miracles of power divine,
From century to century, — nor less

Incomprehensible than heaven and earth
Form'd in six days by His commanding word.
With God a thousand years are as one day;
He in one day can sum a thousand years:
All acts with Him are equal; for no more
It costs Omnipotence to build a world,
And set a sun amidst the firmament,
Than mould a dew-drop, and light up its gem.

This was the landscape stretch'd beneath the flood:
— Rocks, branching out like chains of Alpine mountains;
Gulfs intervening, sandy wildernesses,
Forests of growth enormous, caverns, shoals;
Fountains upspringing, hot and cold, and fresh
And bitter, as on land; volcanic fires
Fiercely out-flashing from earth's central heart,
Nor soon extinguish'd by the rush of waters
Down the rent crater to the unknown abyss

Of Nature's laboratory, where she hides
Her deeds from every eye except her Maker's:
—Such were the scenes which ocean open'd to me;
Mysterious regions, the recluse abode
Of unapproachable inhabitants,
That dwelt in everlasting darkness there.
Unheard by them the roaring of the wind,
The elastic motion of the wave unfelt;
Still life was theirs, well pleasing to themselves,
Nor yet unuseful, as my song shall show.

Here, on a stony eminence, that stood,
Girt with inferior ridges, at the point,
Where light and darkness meet in spectral gloom,
Midway between the height and depth of ocean,
I mark'd a whirlpool in perpetual play,
As though the mountain were itself alive,
And catching prey on every side, with feelers
Countless as sunbeams, slight as gossamer:
Ere long transfigured, each fine film became

An independent creature, self-employ'd,
Yet but an agent in one common work,
The sum of all their individual labours.
Shapeless they seem'd, but endless shapes assumed;
Elongated like worms, they writhed and shrunk
Their tortuous bodies to grotesque dimensions;
Compress'd like wedges, radiated like stars,
Branching like sea-weed, whirl'd in dazzling rings;
Subtle and variable as flickering flames,
Sight could not trace their evanescent changes,
Nor comprehend their motions, till minute
And curious observation caught the clew
To this live labyrinth, — where every one,
By instinct taught, perform'd its little task;
— To build its dwelling and its sepulchre,
From its own essence exquisitely modell'd;
There breed, and die, and leave a progeny,
Still multiplied beyond the reach of numbers,
To frame new cells and tombs; then breed and die
As all their ancestors had done, — and rest,

Hermetically seal'd, each in its shrine,
A statue in this temple of oblivion!
Millions of millions thus, from age to age,
With simplest skill, and toil unweariable,
No moment and no movement unimproved,
Laid line on line, on terrace terrace spread,
To swell the heightening, brightening gradual mound,
By marvellous structure climbing tow'rds the day.
Each wrought alone, yet all together wrought,
Unconscious, not unworthy, instruments,
By which a hand invisible was rearing
A new creation in the secret deep.
Omnipotence wrought in them, with them, by them;
Hence what Omnipotence alone could do
Worms did. I saw the living pile ascend,
The mausoleum of its architects,
Still dying upwards as their labours closed:
Slime the material, but the slime was turn'd
To adamant, by their petrific touch;

Frail were their frames, ephemeral their lives,
Their masonry imperishable. All
Life's needful functions, food, exertion, rest,
By nice economy of Providence
Were overruled to carry on the process,
Which out of water brought forth solid rock.

Atom by atom thus the burthen grew,
Even like an infant in the womb, till Time
Deliver'd ocean of that monstrous birth,
— A coral island, stretching east and west,
In God's own language to its parent saying,
" Thus far, nor farther, shalt thou go ; and here
Shall thy proud waves be stay'd :" — A point at first
It peer'd above those waves ; a point so small,
I just perceived it, fix'd where all was floating ;
And when a bubble cross'd it, the blue film
Expanded like a sky above the speck ;
That speck became a hand-breadth ; day and night
It spread, accumulated, and ere long

Presented to my view a dazzling plain,
White as the moon amid the sapphire sea;
Bare at low water, and as still as death,
But when the tide came gurgling o'er the surface,
'Twas like a resurrection of the dead:
From graves innumerable, punctures fine
In the close coral, capillary swarms
Of reptiles, horrent as Medusa's snakes,
Cover'd the bald-pate reef; then all was life,
And indefatigable industry;
The artizans were twisting to and fro,
In idle-seeming convolutions; yet
They never vanish'd with the ebbing surge,
Till pellicle on pellicle, and layer
On layer, was added to the growing mass.
Ere long the reef o'ertopt the spring-flood's height,
And mock'd the billows when they leapt upon it,
Unable to maintain their slippery hold,
And falling down in foam-wreaths round its verge.
Steep were the flanks, with precipices sharp,

Descending to their base in ocean-gloom.
Chasms few, and narrow, and irregular,
Form'd harbours, safe at once and perilous, —
Safe for defence, but perilous to enter.
A sea-lake shone amidst the fossil isle,
Reflecting in a ring its cliffs and caverns,
With heaven itself seen like a lake below.

Compared with this amazing edifice,
Raised by the weakest creatures in existence,
What are the works of intellectual man?
Towers, temples, palaces, and sepulchres;
Ideal images in sculptured forms,
Thoughts hewn in columns, or in domes expanded,
Fancies through every maze of beauty shown;
Pride, gratitude, affection turn'd to marble,
In honour of the living or the dead;
What are they? — fine-wrought miniatures of art,
Too exquisite to bear the weight of dew,
Which every morn lets fall in pearls upon them,

Till all their pomp sinks down in mouldering relics,
Yet in their ruin lovelier than their prime!
— Dust in the balance, atoms in the gale,
Compared with these achievements in the deep,
Were all the monuments of olden time,
In days when there were giants on the earth:
— Babel's stupendous folly, though it aim'd
To scale heaven's battlements, was but a toy,
The plaything of the world in infancy: —
The ramparts, towers, and gates of Babylon,
Built for eternity, — though, where they stood,
Ruin itself stands still for lack of work,
And Desolation keeps unbroken sabbath; —
Great Babylon, in its full moon of empire,
Even when its "head of gold" was smitten off,
And from a monarch changed into a brute; —
Great Babylon was like a wreath of sand,
Left by one tide, and cancell'd by the next: —
Egypt's dread wonders, still defying Time,
Where cities have been crumbled into sand,

Scatter'd by winds beyond the Libyan desert,
Or melted down into the mud of Nile,
And cast in tillage o'er the corn-sown fields,
Where Memphis flourish'd, and the Pharaohs reign'd;—
Egypt's gray piles of hieroglyphic grandeur,
That have survived the language which they speak,
Preserving its dead emblems to the eye,
Yet hiding from the mind what these reveal;
— Her pyramids would be mere pinnacles,
Her giant statues, wrought from rocks of granite,
But puny ornaments for such a pile
As this stupendous mound of catacombs,
Fill'd with dry mummies of the builder-worms.

Thus far, with undiverted thought, and eye
Intensely fix'd on ocean's concave mirror,
I watch'd the process to its finishing stroke:
Then starting suddenly, as from a trance,
Once more to look upon the blessed sun,

And breathe the gladdening influence of the wind,
Darkness fell on me; giddily my brain
Whirl'd like a torch of fire that seems a circle,
And soon to me the universe was nothing.

THE

PELICAN ISLAND.

CANTO THIRD.

NINE times the age of man that coral reef
Had bleach'd beneath the torrid noon, and borne
The thunder of a thousand hurricanes,
Raised by the jealous ocean, to repel
That strange encroachment on his old domain.
His rage was impotent; his wrath fulfill'd
The counsels of eternal Providence,
And 'stablish'd what he strove to overturn:
For every tempest threw fresh wrecks upon it;
Sand from the shoals, exuviæ from the deep,

Fragments of shells, dead sloughs, sea-monsters'
bones,
Whales stranded in the shallows, hideous weeds
Hurl'd out of darkness by the uprooting surges:
These, with unutterable relics more,
Heap'd the rough surface, till the various mass,
By Nature's chemistry combined and purged,
Had buried the bare rock in crumbling mould,
Not unproductive, but from time to time
Impregnated with seeds of plants, and rife
With embryo animals, or torpid forms
Of reptiles, shrouded in the clefts of trees,
From distant lands, with branches, foliage, fruit,
Pluck'd up and wafted hither by the flood.
Death's spoils, and life's hid treasures, thus enrich'd
And colonized the soil; no particle
Of meanest substance but in course was turn'd
To solid use or noble ornament.
All seasons were propitious; every wind
From the hot Siroc to the wet Monsoon,

Temper'd the crude materials; while heaven's dew,
Fell on the sterile wilderness as sweetly
As though it were a garden of the Lord;
Nor fell in vain; each drop had its commission,
And did its duty, known to Him who sent it.

Such time had past, such changes had transfigured
The aspect of that solitary isle,
When I again in spirit, as before,
Assumed mute watch above it. Slender blades
Of grass were shooting through the dark brown earth,
Like rays of light, transparent in the sun,
Or after showers with liquid gems illumined;
Fountains through filtering sluices sallied forth,
And led fertility where'er they turn'd;
Green herbage graced their banks, resplendent flowers
Unlock'd their treasures, and let flow their fragrance.
Then insect legions, prank'd with gaudiest hues,

Pearl, gold, and purple, swarm'd into existence;
Minute and marvellous creations these!
Infinite multitudes on every leaf,
In every drop, by me discern'd at pleasure,
Were yet too fine for unenlighten'd eye,
— Like stars, whose beams have never reach'd our world,
Though science meets them midway in the heaven
With prying optics, weighs them in her scale;
Measures their orbs, and calculates their courses: —
Some barely visible, some proudly shone,
Like living jewels; some grotesque, uncouth,
And hideous, — giants of a race of pigmies;
These burrow'd in the ground, and fed on garbage,
Those lived deliciously on honey-dews,
And dwelt in palaces of blossom'd bells;
Millions on millions, wing'd, and plumed in front,
And arm'd with stings for vengeance or assault,
Fill'd the dim atmosphere with hum and hurry;
Children of light, and air, and fire they seem'd,

Their lives all ecstasy and quick cross motion.
Thus throve this embryo universe, where all
That was to be was unbegun, or now
Beginning; every day, hour, instant brought
Its novelty, though how or whence I knew not;
Less than omniscience could not comprehend
The causes of effects that seem'd spontaneous,
And sprang in infinite succession, link'd
With kindred issues infinite as they,
For which almighty skill had laid the train
Even in the elements of chaos, — whence
The unravelling clew not for a moment lost
Hold of the silent hand that drew it out.
Thus He who makes and peoples worlds still works
In secrecy, behind a veil of light;
Yet through that hiding of his power, such glimpses
Of glory break as strike presumption blind,
But humble and exalt the humbled soul,
Whose faith the things invisible discerns,
And God informing, guiding, ruling all: —

He speaks, 'tis done; commands, and it stands fast.
He calls an island from the deep, — it comes;
Ordains it culture, — soil and seed are there;
Appoints inhabitants, — from climes unknown,
By undiscoverable paths, they flock
Thither; — like passage-birds to us in spring;
They were not yesterday, — and, lo! to-day
They are, — but what keen eye beheld them coming?

Here was the infancy of life, the age
Of gold in that green isle, itself new-born,
And all upon it in the prime of being,
Love, hope, and promise; 'twas in miniature
A world unsoil'd by sin; a Paradise
Where Death had not yet enter'd; Bliss had newly
Alighted, and shut close his rainbow wings,
To rest at ease, nor dread intruding ill.
Plants of superior growth now sprang apace,
With moon-like blossoms crown'd, or starry glories;
Light flexile shrubs among the greenwood play'd

Fantastic freaks, — they crept, they climb'd, they budded,
And hung their flowers and berries in the sun;
As the breeze taught, they danced, they sung, they twined
Their sprays in bowers, or spread the ground with net-work.
Through the slow lapse of undivided time,
Silently rising from their buried germs,
Trees lifted to the skies their stately heads,
Tufted with verdure, like depending plumage,
O'er stems unknotted, waving to the wind:
Of these in graceful form, and simple beauty,
The fruitful cocoa and the fragrant palm
Excell'd the wilding daughters of the wood,
That stretch'd unwieldy their enormous arms,
Clad with luxuriant foliage, from the trunk,
Like the old eagle, feather'd to the heel;
While every fibre, from the lowest root
To the last leaf upon the topmost twig,

Was held by common sympathy, diffusing
Through all the complex frame unconscious life.
Such was the locust with his hydra boughs,
A hundred heads on one stupendous trunk;
And such the mangrove, which, at full-moon flood,
Appear'd itself a wood upon the waters,
But when the tide left bare its upright roots,
A wood on piles suspended in the air;
Such too the Indian fig, that built itself
Into a sylvan temple arch'd aloof
With airy isles and living colonnades,
Where nations might have worshipp'd God in peace.
From year to year their fruits ungather'd fell;
Not lost, but quickening where they lay, they struck
Root downward, and brake forth on every hand,
Till the strong saplings, rank and file, stood up,
A mighty army, which o'erran the isle,
And changed the wilderness into a forest.

All this appear'd accomplish'd in the space
Between the morning and the evening star:

So, in his third day's work, Jehovah spake,
And Earth, an infant, naked as she came
Out of the womb of chaos, straight put on
Her beautiful attire, and deck'd her robe
Of verdure with ten thousand glorious flowers,
Exhaling incense; crown'd her mountain-heads
With cedars, train'd her vines around their girdles,
And pour'd spontaneous harvests at their feet.

Nor were those woods without inhabitants
Besides the ephemera of earth and air;
— Where glid the sunbeams through the latticed boughs,
And fell like dew-drops on the spangled ground,
To light the diamond-beetle on his way;
— Where cheerful openings let the sky look down
Into the very heart of solitude,
On little garden-plots of social flowers,
That crowded from the shades to peep at daylight;
— Or where impermeable foliage made

Midnight at noon, and chill, damp horror reign'd
O'er dead, fall'n leaves and slimy funguses;
— Reptiles were quicken'd into various birth.
Loathsome, unsightly, swoln to obscene bulk,
Lurk'd the dark toad beneath the infected turf;
The slow-worm crawl'd, the light cameleon climb'd,
And changed his colour as his place he changed;
The nimble lizard ran from bough to bough,
Glancing through light, in shadow disappearing;
The scorpion, many-eyed, with sting of fire,
Bred there, — the legion-fiend of creeping things;
Terribly beautiful, the serpent lay,
Wreath'd like a coronet of gold and jewels,
Fit for a tyrant's brow; anon he flew
Straight as an arrow shot from his own rings,
And struck his victim, shrieking ere it went
Down his strain'd throat, that open sepulchre.

Amphibious monsters haunted the lagoon;
The hippopotamus, amidst the flood,

Flexile and active as the smallest swimmer;
But on the bank, ill balanced and infirm,
He grazed the herbage, with huge head declined,
Or lean'd to rest against some ancient tree.
The crocodile, the dragon of the waters,
In iron panoply, fell as the plague,
And merciless as famine, cranch'd his prey,
While from his jaws, with dreadful fangs all serried,
The life-blood dyed the waves with deadly streams.
The seal and the sea-lion, from the gulf,
Came forth, and couching with their little ones,
Slept on the shelving rocks that girt the shore,
Securing prompt retreat from sudden danger:
The pregnant turtle, stealing out at eve,
With anxious eye, and trembling heart, explored
The loneliest coves, and in the loose warm sand
Deposited her eggs, which the sun hatch'd:
Hence the young brood, that never knew a parent,
Unburrow'd and by instinct sought the sea;
Nature herself, with her own gentle hand,

Dropping them one by one into the flood,
And laughing to behold their antic joy,
When launch'd in their maternal element.

The vision of that brooding world went on;
Millions of beings yet more admirable
Than all that went before them now appear'd;
Flocking from every point of heaven, and filling
Eye, ear, and mind with objects, sounds, emotions
Akin to livelier sympathy and love
Than reptiles, fishes, insects, could inspire.
— Birds, the free tenants of land, air, and ocean,
Their forms all symmetry, their motions grace;
In plumage, delicate and beautiful,
Thick without burthen, close as fishes' scales,
Or loose as full-blown poppies to the breeze;
With wings that might have had a soul within them,
They bore their owners by such sweet enchantment;
— Birds, small and great, of endless shapes and
colours,

Here flew and perch'd, there swam and dived at pleasure;
Watchful and agile, uttering voices wild
And harsh, yet in accordance with the waves
Upon the beach, the winds in caverns moaning,
Or winds and waves abroad upon the water.
Some sought their food among the finny shoals,
Swift darting from the clouds, emerging soon
With slender captives glittering in their beaks;
These in recesses of steep crags constructed
Their eyries inaccessible, and train'd
Their hardy broods to forage in all weathers:
Others, more gorgeously apparell'd, dwelt
Among the woods, on Nature's dainties feeding,
Herbs, seeds, and roots; or, ever on the wing,
Pursuing insects through the boundless air:
In hollow trees or thickets these conceal'd
Their exquisitely woven nests; where lay
Their callow offspring, quiet as the down
On their own breasts, till from her search the dam

With laden bill return'd, and shared the meal
Among her clamorous suppliants, all agape;
Then, cowering o'er them with expanded wings,
She felt how sweet it is to be a mother.
Of these, a few, with melody untaught,
Turn'd all the air to music within hearing,
Themselves unseen; while bolder quiristers
On loftiest branches strain'd their clarion-pipes,
And made the forest echo to their screams
Discordant, — yet there was no discord there,
But temper'd harmony; all tones combining,
In the rich confluence of ten thousand tongues,
To tell of joy and to inspire it. Who
Could hear such concert, and not join in chorus?
Not I; — sometimes entranced, I seem'd to float
Upon a buoyant sea of sounds: again
With curious ear I tried to disentangle
The maze of voices, and with eye as nice
To single out each minstrel, and pursue
His little song through all its labyrinth,

Till my soul enter'd into him, and felt
Every vibration of his thrilling throat,
Pulse of his heart, and flutter of his pinions.
Often, as one among the multitude,
I sang from very fulness of delight;
Now like a winged fisher of the sea,
Now a recluse among the woods, — enjoying
The bliss of all at once, or each in turn.

In storm and calm, through every change of season,
Long flourish'd thus that era of our isle;
It could not last for ever: mark the end.

A cloud arose amid the tranquil heaven,
Like a man's hand, but held a hurricane
Within its grasp. Compress'd into a point,
The tempest struggled to break loose. No breath
Was stirring, yet the billows roll'd aloof,
And the air moan'd portentously; ere long
The sky was hidden, darkness to be felt

Confounded all things; land and water vanish'd,
And there was silence through the universe;
Silence, that made my soul as desolate
As the blind solitude around. Methought
That I had pass'd the bitterness of death
Without the agony, — had, unaware,
Enter'd the unseen world, and in the gap
Between the life that is and that to come,
Awaited judgment. Fear and trembling seized
All that was mortal or immortal in me:
A moment, and the gates of Paradise
Might open to receive, or Hell be moved
To meet me. Strength and spirit fail'd;
Eternity enclosed me, and I knew not,
Knew not, even then, my destiny. To doubt
Was to despair; — I doubted and despair'd.
Then horrible delirium whirl'd me down
To ocean's nethermost recess; the waves
Disparting freely, let me fall, and fall,
Lower and lower, passive as a stone,

Yet rack'd with miserable pangs, that gave
The sense of vain but violent resistance:
And still the depths grew deeper; still the ground
Receded from my feet as I approach'd it.
O how I long'd to light on rocks, that sunk
Like quicksands ere I touch'd them; or to hide
In caverns ever open to ingulf me,
But, like the horizon's limit, never nearer!

Meanwhile the irrepressible tornado,
Burst, and involved the elements in chaos;
Wind, rain, and lightning, in one vast explosion,
Rush'd from the firmament upon the deep.
Heaven's adamantine arch seem'd rent asunder,
And following in a cataract of ruins
My swift descent through bottomless abysses,
Where ocean's bed had been absorb'd in nothing.
I know no farther. When again I saw
The sun, the sea, the island, all was calm,
And all was desolation: not a tree,

Of thousands flourishing erewhile so fair,
But now was split, uprooted, snapt in twain,
Or hurl'd with all its honours to the dust.
Heaps upon heaps, the forest giants lay,
Even like the slain in battle, fall'n to rise
No more, till heaven, and earth, and sea, with all
Therein, shall perish, as to me they seem'd
To perish in that ruthless hurricane.

THE

PELICAN ISLAND.

CANTO FOURTH.

NATURE and Time were twins. Companions still,
Their unretarded, unreturning flight
They hold together. Time, with one sole aim,
Looks ever onward, like the moon through space,
With beaming forehead, dark and bald behind,
Nor ever lost a moment in his course.
Nature looks all around her, like the sun,
And keeps her works, like his dependent worlds,
In constant motion. She hath never miss'd
One step in her victorious march of change,

For chance she knows not; He who made her, gave
His daughter power o'er all except Himself,
— Power in whate'er she does to do *his* will:
Behold the true, the royal law of Nature! —
Hence failures, hinderances, and devastations
Are turn'd to trophies of exhaustless skill,
That out of ruin brings forth strength and beauty,
Yea, life and immortality from death.

I gazed in consternation on the wreck
Of that fair island, strown with prostrate trees,
The soil plough'd up with horrid inundations,
The surface black with sea-weed, not a glimpse
Of verdure peeping; stems, boughs, foliage lay
Rent, broken, clotted, perishing in slime.
" How are the mighty fallen!" I exclaim'd;
" Surely the feller hath come up among ye,
And with a stroke invisible hewn down
The growth of centuries in one dark hour!
Is this the end of all perfection? This

The abortive issue of a new creation,
Erewhile so fruitful in abounding joys,
And hopes fulfilling more than all they promised?
Ages to come can but repair this ravage;
The past is lost for ever. Reckless Time
Stays not; astonied Nature stands aghast,
And wrings her hands in silent agony,
Amidst the annihilation of her works."

Thus raved I; but I wrong'd thee, glorious Nature!
With whom adversity is but transition.
Thou never didst despair, wert never foil'd,
Nor weary with exhaustion, since the day,
When, at the word, "Let there be light," light sprang,
And show'd thee rising from primeval darkness,
That fell back like a veil from thy young form,
And Chaos fled before the apparition.

While yet mine eye was mourning o'er the scene,
Nature and Time were working miracles:

The isle was renovated; grass and flowers
Crept quietly around the fallen trees;
A deeper soil embedded them, and o'er
The common sepulchre of all their race
Threw a rich covering of embroider'd turf,
Lovely to look on as the tranquil main,
When, in his noonward track, the unclouded sun
Tints the green waves with every hue of heaven,
More exquisitely brilliant and aërial
Than morn or evening's gaudier pageantry.
Amidst that burial of the mighty dead,
There was a resurrection from the dust
Of lowly plants, impatient for the light,
Long interrupted by o'ershadowing woods,
While in the womb of earth their embryos tarried,
Unfructifying, yet imperishable.
Huge remnants of the forest stood apart,
Like Tadmor's pillars in the wilderness,
Startling the traveller 'midst his thoughts of home;
— Bare trunks of broken trees, that gave their heads

To the wind's axe, but would not yield their roots
To the uptearing violence of the floods.
From these a slender race of scions sprang,
Which with their filial arms embraced and shelter'd
The monumental relics of their sires;
But, limited in number, scatter'd wide,
And slow of growth, they overran no more
The Sun's dominions in that open isle.

Meanwhile the sea-fowl, that survived the storm,
Whose rage had fleck'd the waves with shatter'd plumes
And weltering carcasses, the prey of sharks,
Came from their fastnesses among the rocks,
And multiplied like clouds when rains are brooding,
Or flowers, when clear warm sunshine follows rain.
The inland birds had perish'd, nor again,
By airy voyagers from shores unknown,
Was silence broken on the unwooded plains:

Another race of wing'd inhabitants
Erelong possess'd and peopled all the soil.

The sun had sunk where sky and ocean meet,
And each might seem the other; sky below,
With richest garniture of clouds inlaid;
Ocean above with isles and continents,
Illumined from a source no longer seen:
Far in the east, through heaven's intenser blue,
Two brilliant sparks, like sudden stars, appear'd;
Not stars indeed, but birds of mighty wing,
Retorted neck, and javelin-pointed bill,
That made the air sigh as they cut it through.
They gain'd upon the eye, and as they came,
Enlarged, grew brighter, and display'd their forms
Amidst the golden evening; pearly-white,
But ruby-tinctured. On the loftiest cliff
They settled, hovering ere they touch'd the ground,
And uttering, in a language of their own,
Yet such as every ear might understand,

And every bosom answer, notes of joy,
And gratulation for that resting-place.
Stately and beautiful they stood, and clapt
Their van-broad pinions, streak'd their ruffled plumes,
And ever and anon broke off to gaze,
With yearning pleasure, told in gentle murmurs,
On that strange land their destined home and country.
Night round them threw her brown transparent gloom,
Through which their lonely images yet shone,
Like things unearthly, while they bow'd their heads
On their full bosoms, and reposed till morn.
I knew the Pelicans, and cried — "All hail!
Ye future dwellers in the wilderness!"

At early dawn I mark'd them in the sky,
Catching the morning colours on their plumes;
Not in voluptuous pastime revelling there,
Among the rosy clouds, while orient heaven

Flamed like the opening gates of Paradise,
Whence issued forth the Angel of the sun,
And gladden'd Nature with returning day:
— Eager for food their searching eyes they fix'd
On ocean's unroll'd volume, from an height,
That brought immensity within their scope;
Yet with such power of vision look'd they down,
As though they watch'd the shell-fish slowly gliding
O'er sunken rocks, or climbing trees of coral. —
On indefatigable wing upheld,
Breath, pulse, existence, seem'd suspended in them;
They were as pictures painted on the sky;
Till suddenly, aslant, away they shot,
Like meteors changed from stars to gleams of lightning,
And struck upon the deep; where, in wild play,
Their quarry flounder'd, unsuspecting harm,
With terrible voracity, they plunged
Their heads among the affrighted shoals, and beat
A tempest on the surges with their wings,

Till flashing clouds of foam and spray conceal'd them.
Nimbly they seized and secreted their prey,
Alive and wriggling in the elastic net,
Which Nature hung beneath their grasping beaks;
Till, swoln with captures, the unwieldly burthen
Clogg'd their slow flight, as heavily to land
These mighty hunters of the deep return'd.
There on the cragged cliffs they perch'd at ease,
Gorging their hapless victims one by one;
Then full and weary, side by side, they slept,
Till evening roused them to the chase again.

Harsh seems the ordinance, that life by life
Should be sustain'd, and yet when all must die,
And be like water spilt upon the ground,
Which none can gather up, — the speediest fate,
Though violent and terrible, is best.
O with what horrors would creation groan, —
What agonies would ever be before us,
Famine and pestilence, disease, despair,

Anguish and pain in every hideous shape,
Had all to wait the slow decay of Nature!
Life were a martyrdom of sympathy;
Death, lingering, raging, writhing, shrieking torture;
The grave would be abolish'd; this gay world
A valley of dry bones, a Golgotha,
In which the living stumbled o'er the dead,
Till they could fall no more, and blind perdition
Swept frail mortality away for ever.
'Twas wisdom, mercy, goodness, that ordain'd
Life in such infinite profusion, — Death
So sure, so prompt, so multiform to those
That never sinn'd, that know not guilt, that fear
No wrath to come, and have no heaven to lose.

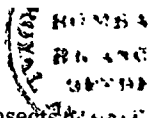
Love found that lonely couple on their isle,
And soon surrounded them with blithe companions.
The noble birds, with skill spontaneous, framed
A nest of reeds among the giant-grass,
That waved in lights and shadows o'er the soil.

There, in sweet thraldom, yet unweening why,
The patient dam, who ne'er till now had known,
Parental instinct, brooded o'er her eggs,
Long ere she found the curious secret out,
That life was hatching in their brittle shells.
Then, from a wild rapacious bird of prey,
Tamed by the kindly process, she became
That gentlest of all living things — a mother;
Gentlest while yearning o'er her naked young,
Fiercest when stirr'd by anger to defend them.
Her mate himself the softening power confess'd,
Forgot his sloth, restrain'd his appetite,
And ranged the sky and fish'd the stream for her.
Or, when o'erwearied Nature forced her off
To shake her torpid feathers in the breeze,
And bathe her bosom in the cooling flood,
He took her place, and felt through every nerve,
While the plump nestlings throbb'd against his heart,
The tenderness that makes the vulture mild;
Yea, half unwillingly his post resign'd,

When, home-sick with the absence of an hour,
She hurried back, and drove him from her seat
With pecking bill, and cry of fond distress,
Answer'd by him with murmurs of delight,
Whose gutturals harsh to her were love's own music.
Then, settling down, like foam upon the wave,
White, flickering, effervescent, soon subsiding,
Her ruffled pinions smoothly she composed;
And, while beneath the comfort of her wings,—
Her crowded progeny quite fill'd the nest,
The halcyon sleeps not sounder, when the wind
Is breathless, and the sea without a curl,
— Nor dreams the halcyon of serener days,
Or nights more beautiful with silent stars,
Than, in that hour, the mother Pelican,
When the warm tumults of affection sunk
Into calm sleep, and dreams of what they were,
— Dreams more delicious than reality.
— He sentinel beside her stood, and watch'd,
With jealous eye, the raven in the clouds,

And the rank sea-mews wheeling round the cliffs.
Woe to the reptile then that ventured nigh;
The snap of his tremendous bill was like
Death's scythe, down-cutting every thing it struck.
The heedless lizard, in his gambols, peep'd
Upon the guarded nest, from out the flowers,
But paid the instant forfeit of his life;
Nor could the serpent's subtlety elude
Capture, when gliding by, nor in defence
Might his malignant fangs and venom save him.

Erelong the thriving brood outgrew their cradle,
Ran through the grass, and dabbled in the pools;
No sooner denizens of earth than made
Free both of air and water; day by day,
New lessons, exercises, and amusements
Employ'd the old to teach, the young to learn.
Now floating on the blue lagoon behold them;
The Sire and Dam in swanlike beauty steering,
Their Cygnets following through the foamy wake,



Picking the leaves of plants, pursuing insects
Or catching at the bubbles as they broke:
Till on some minor fry, in reedy shallows,
With flapping pinions and unsparing beaks,
The well-taught scholars plied their double art,
To fish in troubled waters, and secure
The petty captives in their maiden pouches;
Then hurry with their banquet to the shore,
With feet, wings, breast, half-swimming and half-flying.
But when their pens grew strong to fight the storm,
And buffet with the breakers on the reef,
The Parents put them to severer proof:
On beetling rocks the little ones were marshall'd;
There, by endearments, stripes, example urged
To try the void convexity of heaven,
And plough the ocean's horizontal field.
Timorous at first they flutter'd round the verge,
Balanced and furl'd their hesitating wings,
Then put them forth again with steadier aim;

Now, gaining courage as they felt the wind
Dilate their feathers, fill their airy frames
With buoyancy that bore them from their feet,
They yielded all their burthen to the breeze,
And sail'd and soar'd where'er their guardians led;
Ascending, hovering, wheeling, or alighting,
They search'd the deep in quest of nobler game
Than yet their inexperience had encounter'd;
With these they battled in that element,
Where wings or fins were equally at home,
Till, conquerors in many a desperate strife,
They dragg'd their spoils to land, and gorged at leisure.

Thus perfected in all the arts of life,
That simple Pelicans require, — save one,
Which mother-bird did never teach her daughter,
— The inimitable art to build a nest;
Love, for his own delightful school, reserving
That mystery which novice never fail'd

To learn infallibly when taught by him:
— Hence that small masterpiece of Nature's art,
Still unimpair'd, still unimproved, remains
The same in site, material, shape, and texture.
While every kind a different structure frames,
All build alike of each peculiar kind:
The nightingale, that dwelt in Adam's bower,
And pour'd her stream of music through his dreams;
The soaring lark, that led the eye of Eve
Into the clouds, her thoughts into the heaven
Of heavens, where lark nor eye can penetrate;
The dove, that perch'd upon the Tree of Life,
And made her bed among its thickest leaves;
All the wing'd habitants of Paradise,
Whose songs once mingled with the songs of Angels,
Wove their first nests as curiously and well
As the wood-minstrels in our evil day,
After the labours of six thousand years,
In which their ancestors have fail'd to add,
To alter or diminish, any thing

In that, of which Love only knows the secret,
And teaches every mother for herself,
Without the power to impart it to her offspring:
— Thus perfected in all the arts of life,
That simple Pelicans require, save this,
Those Parents drove their young away; the young
Gaily forsook their parents. Soon enthrall'd
With love-alliances among themselves,
They built their nests, as happy instinct wrought
Within their bosoms, wakening powers unknown,
Till sweet necessity was laid upon them;
They bred, and rear'd their little families,
As they were train'd and disciplined before.

Thus wings were multiplied from year to year,
And ere the patriarch-twain, in good old age,
Resign'd their breath beside that ancient nest,
In which themselves had nursed a hundred broods,
The isle was peopled with their progeny.

THE

PELICAN ISLAND.

CANTO FIFTH.

MEANWHILE, not idle, though unwatch'd by me,
The coral architects in silence rear'd
Tower after tower beneath the dark abyss.
Pyramidal in form the fabrics rose,
From ample basements narrowing to the height,
Until they pierced the surface of the flood,
And dimpling eddies sparkled round their peaks.
Then (if great things with small may be compared)
They spread like water-lilies, whose broad leaves
Make green and sunny islets on the pool,

For golden flies, on summer-days, to haunt,
Safe from the lightning-seizure of the trout;
Or yield their laps to catch the minnow, springing
Clear from the stream to 'scape the ruffian pike,
That prowls in disappointed rage beneath,
And wonders where the little wretch found refuge.

One headland topt the waves, another follow'd;
A third, a tenth, a twentieth soon appear'd,
Till the long-barren gulf in travail lay
With many an infant struggling into birth.
Larger they grew and lovelier, when they breathed
The vital air, and felt the genial sun;
As though a living spirit dwelt in each,
Which, like the inmate of a flexile shell,
Moulded the shapeless slough with its own motion,
And painted it with colours of the morn.
Amidst that groupe of younger sisters, stood
The Isle of Pelicans, as stands the moon
At midnight, queen among the minor stars,

Differing in splendour, magnitude, and distance.
So look'd that archipelago; small isles,
By interwinding channels link'd yet sunder'd;
All flourishing in peaceful fellowship,
Like forest oaks that love society:
— Of various growth and progress; here, a rock
On which a single palm-tree waved its banner;
There, sterile tracts unmoulder'd into soil;
Yonder, dark woods whose foliage swept the water,
Without a speck of turf, or line of shore,
As though their roots were anchor'd in the ocean.
But most were gardens redolent with flowers,
And orchards bending with Hesperian fruit,
That realized the dreams of olden time.

Throughout this commonwealth of sea-sprung lands,
Life kindled in ten thousand happy forms,
Earth, air, and ocean were all full of life.
Still highest in the rank of being, soar'd
The fowls amphibious, and the inland tribes

Of dainty plumage or melodious song.
In gaudy robes of many-colour'd patches,
The parrots swung like blossoms on the trees,
While their harsh voices undeceived the ear.
More delicately pencill'd, finer drawn
In shape and lineament; too exquisite
For gross delights; the Birds of Paradise
Floated aloof, as though they lived on air,
And were the orient progeny of heaven,
Or spirits made perfect veil'd in shining raiment.
From flower to flower, where wild bees flew and sung,
As countless, small, and musical as they,
Showers of bright humming-birds came down, and plied
The same ambrosial task, with slender bill
Extracting honey, hidden in those bells,
Whose richest blooms grew pale beneath the blaze
Of twinkling winglets hovering o'er their petals,
Brilliant as raindrops, when the western sun
Sees his own miniature of beams in each.

High on the cliffs, down on the shelly reef,
Or gliding like a silver-shaded cloud
Through the blue heaven, the mighty albatross
Inhaled the breezes, sought his humble food,
Or, where his kindred like a flock reposed,
Without a shepherd, on the grassy downs,
Smooth'd his white fleece, and slumber'd in their midst.

Wading through marshes, where the rank sea-weed
With spongy moss and flaccid lichens strove,
Flamingos, in their crimson tunics, stalk'd
On stately legs, with far-exploring eye;
Or fed and slept, in regimental lines,
Watch'd by their sentinels, whose clarion-screams
All in an instant woke the startled troop,
That mounted like a glorious exhalation,
And vanish'd through the welkin far away,
Nor paused till, on some lonely coast alighting,
Again their gorgeous cohort took the field.

The fierce sea-eagle, humble in attire,
In port terrific, from his lonely eyrie
(Itself a burthen for the tallest tree)
Look'd down o'er land and sea as his dominions:
Now, from long chase, descending with his prey,
Young seal or dolphin, in his deadly clutch,
He fed his eaglets in the noon-day sun:
Nor less at midnight ranged the deep for game;
At length entrapp'd with his own talons, struck
Too deep to be withdrawn, where a strong shark,
Roused by the anguish, with impetuous plunge,
Dragg'd his assailant down into the abyss,
Struggling in vain for liberty and life;
His young ones heard their parent's dying shrieks,
And watch'd in vain for his returning wing.

Here ran the stormy petrels on the waves,
As though they were the shadows of themselves
Reflected from a loftier flight through space.
The stern and gloomy raven haunted here,

A hermit of the atmosphere, on land
Among vociferating crowds a stranger,
Whose hoarse, low, ominous croak disclaim'd communion
With those, upon the offal of whose meals
He gorged alone, or tore their own rank corses.
The heavy penguin, neither fish nor fowl,
With scaly feathers and with finny wings,
Plump'd stone-like from the rock into the gulf,
Rebounding upward swift as from a sling.
Through yielding water as through limpid air,
The cormorant, Death's living arrow, flew,
Nor ever miss'd a stroke, or dealt a second,
So true the infallible destroyer's aim.

Millions of creatures such as these, and kinds
Unnamed by man, possess'd those busy isles;
Each, in its brief existence, to itself,
The first, last being in the universe,
With whom the whole began, endured, and ended:

Blest ignorance of bliss, not made for them!
Happy exemption from the fear of death,
And that which makes the pangs of death immortal,
The undying worm, the fire unquenchable,
— Conscience, the bosom-hell of guilty man!
The eyes of all look'd up to Him, whose hand
Had made them, and supplied their daily need;
Although they knew Him not, they look'd to Him;
And He, whose mercy is o'er all his works,
Forgot not one of his large family,
But cared for each as for an only child.
They plough'd not, sow'd not, gather'd not in barns,
Thought not of yesterday, nor knew to-morrow;
Yet harvests inexhaustible they reap'd
In the prolific furrows of the main;
Or from its sunless caverns brought to light
Treasures for which contending kings might war, —
Gems, for which queens would yield their hands to slaves, —
By them despised as valueless and nought;

From the rough shell they pick'd the luscious food,
And left a prince's ransom in the pearl.

Nature's prime favourites were the Pelicans;
High-fed, long-lived, and sociable and free,
They ranged in wedded pairs, or martial bands,
For play or slaughter. Oft have I beheld
A little army take the wat'ry field,
With outstretch'd pinions form a spacious ring,
Then pressing to the centre, through the waves,
Enclose thick shoals within their narrowing toils,
Till multitudes entangled fell a prey:
Or, when the flying-fish in sudden clouds,
Burst from the sea, and flutter'd through the air,
These giant fowlers snapt them like musquitos
By swallows hunted through the summer sky.

I turn'd again to look upon that isle,
Whence from one pair those colonies had issued
That through these Cyclades at freedom roved,

Fish'd every stream, and fed on every shore;
When, lo! a spectacle of strange extremes
Awaken'd sweet and melancholy thoughts:
All that is helpless, beautiful, endearing
In infancy, in prime of youth, in love;
All that is mournful in decay, old age,
And dissolution; all that awes the eye,
And chills the bosom, in the sad remains
Of poor mortality, which last awhile,
To show that life hath been, but is no longer;
— All these in blended images appear'd,
Exulting, brooding, perishing before me.

It was a land of births. — Unnumber'd nests,
Of reeds and rushes, studded all the ground.
A few were desolate and fallen to ruin;
Many were building from those waste materials;
On some the dams were sitting, till the stroke
Of their quick bills should break the prison-shells,
And let the little captives forth to light,

With their first breath demanding food and shelter.
In others I beheld the brood new-fledged,
Struggling to clamber out, take wing and fly
Up to the heavens, or fathom the abyss.
Meanwhile the parent from the sea supplied
A daily feast, and from the pure lagoon
Brought living water in her sack, to cool
The impatient fever of their clamorous throats.
No need had she, as hieroglyphics feign,
(A mystic lesson of maternal love),
To pierce her breast, and with the vital stream,
Warm from its fountain, slake their thirst in blood.
— The blood which nourish'd them ere they were hatch'd,
While the crude egg within herself was forming.

It was a land of death. — Between those nests,
The quiet earth was feather'd with the spoils
Of aged Pelicans, that hither came
To die in peace, where they had spent in love

The sweetest periods of their long existence.
Where they were wont to build, and breed their young,
There they lay down to rise no more for ever,
And close their eyes upon the dearest sight
On which their living eyes had loved to dwell,
— The nest where every joy to them was centred.
There rife corruption tainted them so lightly,
The moisture seem'd to vanish from their relics,
As dew from gossamer, that leaves the net-work
Spread on the ground, and glistening in the sun;
Thus when a breeze the ruffled plumage stirr'd,
That lay like drifted snow upon the soil,
Their slender skeletons were seen beneath,
So delicately framed, and half transparent,
That I have marvell'd how a bird so noble,
When in his full magnificent attire,
With pinions wider than the king of vultures',
And down elastic, thicker than the swan's,
Should leave so small a cage of ribs to mark
Where vigorous life had dwelt a hundred years.

Such was that scene; the dying and the dead,
Next neighbours to the living and the unborn.
O how much happiness was here enjoy'd!
How little misery had been suffer'd here!
Those humble Pelicans had each fulfill'd
The utmost purpose of its span of being,
And done its duty in its narrow circle,
As surely as the sun, in his career,
Accomplishes the glorious end of his.

THE

PELICAN ISLAND.

CANTO SIXTH.

" And thus," methought, " ten thousand suns may lead
The stars to glory in their annual courses ;
Moons without number thus may wax and wane,
And winds alternate blow in cross-monsoons,
While here — through self-beginning rounds, self-ending,
Then self-renew'd, without advance or failure, —
Existence fluctuates only like the tide,
Whose everlasting changes bring no change,

But billow follows billow to the shore,
Recoils, and billow out of billow swells;
An endless whirl of ebbing, flowing foam,
Where every bubble is like every other,
And Ocean's face immutable as Heaven's.
Here is no progress to sublimer life;
Nature stands still,—stands at the very point,
Whence from a vantage-ground her bolder steps
Might rise resplendent on the scale of being;
Rank over rank, awakening with her tread,
Inquisitive, intelligent; aspiring,
Each above other, all above themselves,
Till every generation should transcend
The former, as the former all the past.

" Such, such alone were meet inhabitants
For these fair isles, so wonderfully form'd
Amidst the solitude of sea and sky,
On which my wandering spirit first was cast,
And still beyond whose girdle, eye nor wing

Can carry me to undiscover'd climes,
Where many a nobler race may dwell; whose waifs
And exiles, toss'd by tempests on the flood,
Hither might drift upon their native trees;
Or, like their own free birds, on fearless pinions,
Make voyages amidst the pathless heaven,
And, lighting, colonize these fertile tracts,
Recover'd from the barrenness of ocean,
Whose wealth might well repay the brave adventure.
— Hath Nature spent her strength? Why stopp'd
she here?
Why stopp'd not lower, if to rise no higher?
Can she not summon from more ancient regions,
Beyond the rising or the setting sun,
Creatures, as far above the mightiest here
As yonder eagle, flaming at high noon,
Outsoars the bat that flutters through the twilight?
Or as the tender Pelican excels
The anomalous abortion of the rock,
In which plant, fossil, animal unite?

" But changes here may happen — changes must!
What hinders that new shores should yet ascend
Out of the bosom of the deep, and spread
Till all converge, from one circumference,
Into a solid breadth of table-land,
Bound by the horizon, canopied with heaven,
And ocean in his own abyss absorb'd?"

While these imaginations cross'd the mind,
My thoughts fulfill'd themselves before mine eyes;
The islands moved like circles upon water,
Expanding till they touch'd each other, closed
The interjacent straits, and thus became
A spacious continent which fill'd the sea.
That change was total, like a birth, a death;
— Birth, that from native darkness brings to light
The young inhabitant of this gay world;
Death, that from seen to unseen things removes,
And swallows time up in eternity.
That which had been, for ever ceased to be,

And that which follow'd was a new creation
Wrought from the disappearance of the old.
So fled that pageant universe away,
With all its isles and waters. So I found
Myself translated to that other world,
By sleight of fancy, like the unconscious act
Of waking from a pleasant dream, with sweet
Relapse into a more transporting vision.

The nursery of brooding Pelicans,
The dormitory of their dead, had vanish'd,
And all the minor spots of rock and verdure,
The abodes of happy millions, were no more;
But in their place a shadowy landscape lay,
On whose extremest western verge, a gleam
Of living silver, to the downward sun
Intensely glittering, mark'd the boundary line,
Which ocean, held by chains invisible,
Fretted and foam'd in vain to overleap.
Woods, mountains, valleys, rivers, glens, and plains

Diversified the scene: — that scene was wild,
Magnificent, deform'd, or beautiful,
As framed expressly for all kinds of life,
With all life's labours, sufferings, and enjoyments;
Untouch'd as yet by any meaner hand
Than His who made it, and pronounced it good.
And good it was; — free as light, air, fire, water,
To every thing that breathed upon its surface,
From the small worm that crept abroad at midnight
To sip cool dews, and feed on sleeping flowers,
Then slunk into its hole, the little vampire!
Through every species which I yet had seen,
To animals, of tribes and forms unknown
In the lost islands; — beasts that ranged the forests,
Grazed in the valleys, bounded o'er the hills,
Reposed in rich savannahs, from grey rocks
Pick'd the thin herbage sprouting through their fissures;
Or in waste howling deserts found oases,
And fountains pouring sweeter streams than nectar,

And more melodious than the nightingale,
— So to the faint and perishing they seem'd.

I gazed on ruminating herds of kine,
And sheep for ever wandering; goats that swung
Like spiders on the crags, so slight their hold;
Deer, playful as their fawns, in peace, but fell,
As battling bulls in wars of jealousy:
Through flowery champaigns roam'd the fleet gazelles,
Of many a colour, size, and shape, — all graceful;
In every look, step, attitude prepared,
Even at the shadow of a cloud, to vanish,
And leave a solitude where thousands stood,
With heads declined, and nibbling eagerly
As locusts when they light on some new soil,
And move no more till they have shorn it bare.
On these, with famine unappeasable,
Lithe, muscular, huge-boned, and limb'd for leaping,
The brindled tyrants of brute nature prey'd:

The weak and timid bow'd before the strong,
The many by the few were hourly slaughter'd,
Where power was right, and violence was law.

Here couch'd the panting tiger, on the watch;
Impatient but unmoved, his fire-ball eyes
Made horrid twilight in the sunless jungle,
Till on the heedless buffalo he sprang,
Dragg'd the low-bellowing monster to his lair,
Crash'd through the ribs at once into its heart,
Quaff'd the hot blood, and gorged the quivering flesh,
Till drunk he lay, as powerless as the carcass.

There, to the solitary lion's roar
So many echoes answer'd, that there seem'd
Ten in the field for one; — where'er they turn'd,
The flying animals, from cave to cave,
Heard his voice issuing; and recoil'd aghast,
Only to meet it nearer than before,

Or, ere they saw his shadow or his face,
Fall dead beneath his thunder-striking paw.

Calm amidst scenes of havoc, in his own
Huge strength impregnable, the elephant
Offended none, but led his quiet life
Among his old contemporary trees,
Till Nature laid him gently down to rest
Beneath the palm, which he was wont to make
His prop in slumber; there his relics lay
Longer than life itself had dwelt within them.
Bees in the ample hollow of his skull
Piled their wax-citadels, and stored their honey;
Thence sallied forth to forage through the fields,
And swarm'd in emigrating legions thence:
There, little burrowing animals threw up
Hillocks beneath the overarching ribs;
While birds, within the spinal labyrinth,
Contrived their nests:— so wandering Arabs pitch
Their tents amidst Palmyra's palaces;

So Greek and Roman peasants build their huts
Beneath the shadow of the Parthenon,
Or on the ruins of the Capitol.

But unintelligent creation soon
Fail'd to delight; the novelty departed,
And all look'd desolate; my eye grew weary
Of seeing that which it might see for ever
Without a new idea or emotion;
The mind within me panted after mind,
The spirit sigh'd to meet a kindred spirit,
And in my human heart there was a void,
Which nothing but humanity could fill.
At length, as though a prison-door were open'd,
Chains had fall'n off, and by an angel-guide
Conducted, I escaped that desert-bourne;
And instantaneously I travell'd on,
Yet knew not how, for wings nor feet I plied,
But with a motion, like the lapse of thought,
O'er many a vale and mountain I was carried,
Till in the east, above the ocean's brim,

I saw the morning sun, and stay'd my course,
Where vestiges of rude but social life
Arrested and detain'd attention long.

Amidst the crowd of grovelling animals,
A being more majestic stood before me;
I met an eye that look'd into my soul,
And seem'd to penetrate mine inmost thoughts.
Instinctively I turn'd away to hide them,
For shame and quick compunction came upon me,
As though detected on forbidden ground,
Gazing on things unlawful: but my heart
Relented quickly, and my bosom throbb'd
With such unutterable tenderness,
That every sympathy of human nature
Was by the beating of a pulse enkindled,
And flash'd at once throughout the mind's recesses,
As in a darken'd chamber, objects start
All round the walls, the moment light breaks in.
The sudden tumult of surprise awoke
My spirit from that trance of vague abstraction,

Wherein I lived through ages, and beheld
Their generations pass so swiftly by me,
That years were moments in their flight, and hours
The scenes of crowded centuries reveal'd;
I sole spectator of the wondrous changes,
Spell-bound as in a dream, and acquiescing
In all that happen'd, though perplex'd with strange
Conceit of something wanting through the whole.
That spell was broken, like the vanish'd film
From eyes born blind, miraculously open'd; —
'Twas gone, and I became myself again,
Restored to memory of all I knew
From books or schools, the world or sage experience;
With all that folly or misfortune taught me, —
Each hath her lessons, — wise are they that learn.
Still the mysterious revery went on,
And I was still sole witness of its issues,
But with clear mind and disenchanted sight,
Beholding, judging, comprehending all;
Not passive and bewilder'd as before.

What was the being which I then beheld?
Man going forth amidst inferior creatures:
Not as he rose in Eden out of dust,
Fresh from the moulding hand of Deity;
Immortal breath upon his lips; the light
Of uncreated glory in his soul;
Lord of the nether universe, and heir
Of all above him, — all above the sky,
The sapphire pavement of his future palace:
Not so; — but rather like that morning-star,
Which from the highest empyrean fell
Into the bottomless abyss of darkness;
There flaming only with malignant beams
Among the constellations of his peers,
The third part of heaven's host, with him cast down
To irretrievable perdition, — thence,
Amidst the smoke of unillumined fires,
Issuing like horrid sparks to blast creation:
— Thus, though in dim eclipse, before me stood,
As from a world invisible call'd up,

Man, in the image of his Maker form'd,
Man, to the image of his tempter fall'n;
Yet still as far above infernal fiends,
As once a little lower than the angels.
I knew him, own'd him, loved him, and exclaim'd,
"Bone of my bone, flesh of my flesh, my Brother!
Hail in the depth of thy humiliation;
For dear thou art, amidst unconscious ruin, —
Dear to the kindliest feelings of my soul,
As though one womb had borne us, and one mother
At her sweet breasts had nourish'd us as twins."

I saw him sunk in loathsome degradation,
A naked, fierce, ungovernable savage,
Companion to the brutes, himself more brutal;
Superior only in the craft that made
The serpent subtlest beast of all the field,
Whose guile unparadised the world, and brought
A curse upon the earth which God had blessed.
That curse was here, without the mitigation

Of healthful toil, that half redeems the ground
Whence man was taken, whither he returns,
And which repays him bread for patient labour,
— Labour, the symbol of his punishment,
— Labour, the secret of his happiness.
The curse was here; for thorns and briars o'erran
The tangled labyrinths, yet briars bare roses,
And thorns threw out their annual snow of blossoms:
The curse was here; and yet the soil untill'd
Pour'd forth spontaneous and abundant harvests,
Pulse and small berries, maize in strong luxuriance,
And slender rice that grew by many waters;
The forests cast their fruits, in husk or rind,
Yielding sweet kernels or delicious pulp,
Smooth oil, cool milk, and unfermented wine,
In rich and exquisite variety.
On these the indolent inhabitants
Fed without care or forethought, like the swine
That grubb'd the turf, and taught them where to look

For dainty earth-nuts and nutritious roots;
Or the small monkeys, capering on the boughs,
And rioting on nectar and ambrosia,
The produce of that Paradise run wild:—
No,— these were merry, if they were not wise;
While man's untutor'd hordes were sour and sullen,
Like those abhorr'd baboons, whose gluttonous taste
They follow'd safely in their choice of food;
And whose brute semblance of humanity
Made them more hideous than their prototypes,
That bore the genuine image and inscription,
Defaced indeed, but yet indelible.
—From ravening beasts, and fowls that fish'd the ocean,
Men learned to prey on meaner animals,
But found a secret out which birds or beasts,
Most cruel, cunning, treacherous, never knew,
— The luxury of devouring one another.

Such were my kindred in their lost estate,
From whose abominations while I turn'd,

As from a pestilence, I mourn'd and wept
With bitter lamentation o'er their ruin;
Sunk as they were in ignorance of all
That raises man above his origin,
And elevates to heaven the spirit within him,
To which the Almighty's breath gave understanding.

Large was their stature, and their frames athletic;
Their skins were dark, their locks like eagles' feathers;
Their features terrible; — when roused to wrath,
All evil passions lighten'd through their eyes,
Convulsed their bosoms like possessing fiends,
And loosed what sets on fire the course of nature,
— The tongue of malice, set on fire of hell,
Which then, in cataracts of horrid sounds,
Raged through their gnashing teeth and foaming lips,
Making the ear to tingle, and the soul
Sicken, with spasms of strange revolting horror,
As if the blood changed colour in the veins,

While hot and cold it ran about the heart,
And red to pale upon the cheek it shew'd.
Their visages at rest were winter-clouds,
Fix'd gloom, whence sun nor shower could be foretold:
But, in high revelry, when full of prey,
Cannibal prey, tremendous was their laughter;
Their joy, the shock of earthquakes overturning
Mountains, and swamping rivers in their course;
Or subterranean elements embroil'd, —
Wind, fire, and water, till the cleft volcano
Gives to their devastating fury vent:
That joy was lurking hatred in disguise,
And not less fatal in its last excess.
They danced, — like whirlwinds in the Libyan waste,
When the dead sand starts up in living pillars,
That mingle, part, and cross, then burst in ruin
On man and beast; — they danced to shouts and screams,
Drums, gongs, and horns, their deafening din inflicting

On nerves and ears enraptured with such clangour ;
Till mirth grew madness, and the feast a fray,
That left the field strown with unnatural carnage,
To furnish out a more unnatural feast,
And lay the train to inflame a bloodier fray.

They dwelt in dens and caverns of the earth,
Won by the valiant from their brute possessors,
And held in hourly peril of reprisals
From the ferocious brigands of the woods,
The lioness, benighted with her whelps,
There seeking shelter from the drenching storm,
Met with unseen resistance on the threshold,
And perish'd ere she knew by what she fell ;
Or, finding all within asleep, surprised
The inmates in their dreams, from which no more
Her deadly vengeance suffer'd them to wake.
— On open plains they framed low, narrow huts
Of boughs, the wreck of windfalls or of Time,
Wattled with canes, and thatch'd with reeds and leaves ;

There from afflictive noon sought twilight shadow,
Or slumber'd in the smoke of greenwood fires,
To drive away the pestilent musquitos.
— Some built unwieldy nests among the trees,
In which to doze by night, or watch by day
The joyful moment, from that ambuscade
To slay the passing antelope, or wound
The jackall chasing it, with sudden arrows
From bows that task'd a giant's strength to bend.
In flight or combat, on the champaign field,
They ran atilt with flinty-headed spears;
Or launch'd the lighter javelin through the air,
Follow'd its motion with a basilisk's eye,
And shriek'd with gladness when a life was spill'd:
They sent the pebble hissing from the sling,
Hot as the curse from lips that would strike dead,
If words were stones; here stones, as swift as words
Can reach the ear, the unwary victim smote.
In closer conflict, breast to breast, when one
Or both must perish on the spot, they fought

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With clubs of iron-wood and ponderous force,
Wielded with terrible dexterity,
And falling down like thunderbolts, which nought
But counter-thunderbolts could meet or parry.
Rude-fashion'd weapons! yet the lion's jaws,
The tiger's grasp, the eagle's beak and talons,
The serpent's fangs, were not more formidable,
More sure to hit, or, hitting, sure to kill.

They knew not shame nor honour, yet knew pride;
— The pride of strength, skill, speed, and subtlety;
The pride of tyranny and violence,
Not o'er the mighty only, whom their arm
Had crush'd in battle, or had basely slain
By treacherous ambush, or more treacherous smiles,
Embracing while they stabb'd the heart that met
Their specious seeming with unguarded breast:
— The reckless savages display'd their pride
By vile oppression in its vilest forms, —
Oppression of the weak and innocent;

Infancy, womanhood, old age, disease,
The lame, the halt, the blind, were wrong'd, neglected,
Exposed to perish by wild beasts in woods,
Cast to the crocodiles in rivers; murder'd,
Even by their dearest kindred, in cold blood,
To rid themselves of Nature's gracious burthens,
In mercy laid on man to teach *him* mercy.

But their prime glory was insane debauch,
To inflict and bear excruciating tortures;
The unshrinking victim, while the flesh was rent
From his live limbs, and eaten in his presence,
Still in his death-pangs taunted his tormentors
With tales of cruelty more diabolic,
Wreak'd by himself upon the friends of those
Who now their impotence of vengeance wasted
On him, and drop by drop his life extorted
With thorns and briars of the wilderness,
Or the slow violence of untouching fire.

Vanity too, pride's mannikin, here play'd
Satanic tricks to ape her master-fiend.
The leopard's beauteous spoils, the lion's mane,
Engirt the loins, and waved upon the shoulders
Of those whose wiles or arms had won such tro-
phies:
Rude-punctured figures of all loathsome things,
Toads, scorpions, asps, snakes' eyes and double
tongues,
In flagrant colours on their tattooed limbs,
Gave proof of intellect, not dead but sleeping,
And in its trance enacting strange vagaries.
Bracelets of human teeth, fangs of wild beasts,
The jaws of sharks, and beaks of ravenous birds,
Glitter'd and tinkled round their arms and ankles;
While skulls of slaughter'd enemies, in chains
Of natural elf-locks, dangled from the necks
Of those, whose own bare skulls and cannibal teeth
Ere long must deck more puissant fiends than they.

On ocean, too, they exercised dominion;—
Of hollow trees composing slight canoes,
They paddled o'er the reefs, cut through the breakers,
And rode the untamed billows far from shore;
Amphibious from their infancy, and fearing
Nought in the deepest waters save the shark;-
Even him, well arm'd, they gloried to encounter,
And when he turn'd to ope those gates of death,
That led into the Hades of his gorge,
Smote with such stern decision to his vitals,
And vanish'd through the blood-beclouded waves,
That, blind and desperate in his agony,
Headlong he plunged, and perish'd in the abyss.

Woman was here the powerless slave of man;
Thus fallen Adam tramples fallen Eve,
Through all the generations of his sons,
In whose barbarian veins the old serpent's venom
Turns pure affection into hideous lust,

And wrests the might of his superior arm
(Given to defend and bless his meek companion)
Into the very yoke and scourge of bondage;
Till limbs, by beauty moulded, eyes of gladness,
And the full bosom of confiding truth,
Made to delight and comfort him in toil,
And change Care's den into a halcyon's nest,
— Are broke with drudgery, quench'd with stagnant tears,
Or wrung with lonely unimparted woe.
Man is beside himself, not less than fall'n
Below his dignity, who owns not woman
As nearer to his heart than when she grew
A rib within him, — as his heart's own heart.

He slew the game with his unerring arrow,
But left it in the bush for her to drag
Home, with her feeble hands, already burthened
With a young infant clinging to her shoulders.
Here she fell down in travail by the way,

Her piteous groans unheard, or heard unanswer'd;
There, with her convoy, she—mother, and child,
And slaughter'd deer—became some wild beast's
prey;
Though spoils so rich not one could long enjoy,—
Soon the woods echoed with the huge uproar
Of savage throats contending for the bodies,
Till not a bone was left for farther quarrel.
— He chose the spot; she piled the wood, she wove
The supple withes, and bound the thatch that form'd
The ground-built cabin or the tree-swung nest.
— He brain'd the drowsy panther in his den,
At noon o'ercome by heat, and with closed lids
Fearing assaults from none but vexing flies,
Which, with his ring-streak'd tail he switch'd away:
The citadel thus storm'd, the monster slain,
By the dread prowess of his daring arm,
She roll'd the stones, and planted the stockade,
To fortify the garrison for him,

Who scornfully look'd on, at ease reclined,
Or only rose to beat her to the task.

Yet, midst the gall and wormwood of her lot,
She tasted joys which none but woman knows,
— The hopes, fears, feelings, raptures of a mother,
Well-nigh compensating for his unkindness,
Whom yet with all her fervent soul she loved.
Dearer to her than all the universe,
The looks, the cries, the embraces of her babes;
In each of whom she lived a separate life,
And felt the fountain, whence their veins were fill'd,
Flow in perpetual union with the streams,
That swell'd their pulses, and throbb'd back through hers.
Oh! 'twas benign relief when my vex'd eye
Could turn from man, the sordid, selfish savage,
And gaze on woman in her self-denial,
To him and to their offspring all alive,
Dead only to herself, — save when she won

His unexpected smile; then, then she look'd
A thousand times more beautiful, to meet
A glance of aught like tenderness from him;
And sent the sunshine of her happy heart
So warm into the charnel-house of his,
That Nature's genuine sympathies awoke,
And he almost forgot himself in her.
O man! lost man! amidst the desolation
Of goodness in thy soul, there yet remains
One spark of Deity, — that spark is love.

THE

PELICAN ISLAND.

CANTO SEVENTH.

Ages again, with silent revolution,
Brought morn and even, noon and night, with all
The old vicissitudes of Nature's aspect:
Rains in their season fertilized the ground,
Winds sow'd the seeds of every kind of plant
On its peculiar soil; while suns matured
What winds had sown, and rains in season water'd,
Providing nourishment for all that lived:
Man's generations came and went like these,

— The grass and flowers that wither where they
spring;
— The brutes that perish wholly where they fall.

Thus while I mused on these in long succession,
And all remain'd as all had been before,
I cried, as I was wont, though none did listen,
— 'Tis sweet sometimes to speak and be the
hearer;
For he is twice himself who can converse
With his own thoughts, as with a living throng
Of fellow-travellers in solitude;
And mine too long had been my sole companions:
— " What is this mystery of human life?
In rude or civilized society,
Alike, a pilgrim's progress through this world
To that which is to come, by the same stages;
With infinite diversity of fortune
To each distinct adventurer by the way!

" Life is the transmigration of a soul
Through various bodies, various states of being;
New manners, passions, tastes, pursuits in each;
In nothing, save in consciousness, the same.
Infancy, adolescence, manhood, age,
Are alway moving onward, alway losing
Themselves in one another, lost at length,
Like undulations, on the strand of death.
The sage of threescore years and ten looks back, —
With many a pang of lingering tenderness,
And many a shuddering conscience-fit, — on what
He hath been, is not, cannot be again;
Nor trembles less with fear and hope, to think
What he is now, but cannot long continue,
And what he must be through uncounted ages.
— The Child; — we know no more of happy childhood,
Than happy childhood knows of wretched eld;
And all our dreams of its felicity
Are incoherent as its own crude visions:
We but begin to live from that fine point

Which memory dwells on, with the morning-star,
The earliest note we heard the cuckoo sing,
Or the first daisy that we ever pluck'd,
When thoughts themselves were stars, and birds, and flowers,
Pure brilliance, simplest music, wild perfume.
Thenceforward, mark the metamorphoses!
— The Boy, the Girl; — when all was joy, hope, promise;
Yet who would be a Boy, a Girl again,
To bear the yoke, to long for liberty,
And dream of what will never come to pass?
— The Youth, the Maiden; — living but for love,
Yet learning soon that life hath other cares,
And joys less rapturous, but more enduring:
— The Woman; — in her offspring multiplied;
A tree of life, whose glory is her branches,
Beneath whose shadow, she (both root and stem)
Delights to dwell in meek obscurity,
That they may be the pleasure of beholders:

— The Man; — as father of a progeny,
Whose birth requires his death to make them room,
Yet in whose lives he feels his resurrection,
And grows immortal in his children's children:
— Then the gray Elder; — leaning on his staff,
And bow'd beneath a weight of years, that steal
Upon him with the secrecy of sleep,
(No snow falls lighter than the snow of age,
None with such subtlety benumbs the frame,)
Till he forgets sensation, and lies down
Dead in the lap of his primeval mother;
She throws a shroud of turf and flowers around him,
Then calls the worms, and bids them do their office:
— Man giveth up the ghost, — and where is He?"

That startling question broke my lucubration;
I saw those changes realized before me;
Saw them recurring in perpetual line,
The line unbroken, while the thread ran on,
Failing at this extreme, at that renew'd,

— Like buds, leaves, blossoms, fruits on herbs and trees;
Like mites, flies, reptiles; birds, and beasts, and fishes,
Of every length of period here, — all mortal,
And all resolved into those elements
Whence they had emanated, whence they drew
Their sustenance, and which their wrecks recruited
To generate and foster other forms
As like themselves as were the lights of heaven,
For ever moving in serene succession,
— Not like those lights unquenchable by time,
But ever changing, like the clouds that come,
Who can tell whence? and go, who can tell whither?
Thus the swift series of man's race elapsed,
As for no higher destiny created
Than aught beneath them, — from the elephant
Down to the worm, thence to the zoophyte,
That link which binds Prometheus to his rock,
The living fibre to insensate matter.

They were not, then they were; the unborn, the
living!
They were, then were not; they had lived and
died;
No trace, no record of their date remaining,
Save in the memory of kindred beings,
Themselves as surely hastening to oblivion;
Till, where the soil had been renew'd by relics,
And earth, air, water were one sepulchre,
Earth, air, and water might be search'd in vain,
Atom by atom scrutinized with eyes
Of microscopic power, that could discern
The population of a dew-drop, yet
No particle betray the buried secret
Of what they had been, or of what they were:
Life thus was swallow'd by mortality,
Mortality thus swallow'd up of life,
And man remain'd the world's unmoved possessor,
Though every moment men appear'd and vanish'd.

Oh! 'twas heart-sickness to behold them thus
Perishing without knowledge; — perishing,
As though they were but things of dust and ashes.
They lived unconscious of their noblest powers,
As were the rocks and mountains which they trod
Of gold and jewels hidden in their bowels;
They lived unconscious of what lived within them,
The deathless spirit, as were the stars that shone
Above their heads, of their own emanations.
And did it live within them? did there dwell
Fire brought from heaven in forms of miry clay?
Untemper'd as the slime of Babel's builders,
And left unfinish'd like their monstrous work?
To me, alas! they seem'd but living bodies,
With still-born souls which never could be quicken'd,
Till death brought immortality to light,
And from the darkness of their earthly prison
Placed them at once before the bar of God;
Then first to learn, at their eternal peril,
The fact of his existence and their own.

Imagination durst not follow them,
Nor stand one moment at that dread tribunal.
" Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?"
I trembled while I spake. I could not bear
The doubt, fear, horror, that o'erhung the fate
Of millions, millions, millions, — living, dying,
Without a hope to hang a hope upon,
That of the whole it might not be affirm'd,
— " 'Twere better that they never had been born."
I turn'd away, and look'd for consolation,
Where Nature else had shrunk with loathing back,
Or imprecated curses, in her wrath,
Even on the fallen creatures of my race,
O'er whose mysterious doom my heart was breaking.

I saw an idiot with long haggard visage,
And eye of vacancy, trolling his tongue
From cheek to cheek; then muttering syllables,
Which all the learn'd on earth could not interpret;
Yet were they sounds of gladness, tones of pleasure,

Ineffable tranquillity expressing,
Or pure and buoyant animal delight:
For bright the sun shone round him; cool the breeze
Play'd in the floating shadow of the palm,
Where he lay rolling in voluptuous sloth:
And he had fed deliciously on fruit,
That fell into his lap, and virgin honey,
That melted from the hollow of the rock,
Whither the hum and stir of bees had drawn him.
He knew no bliss beside, save sleep when weary,
Or reveries like this, when broad awake.
Glimpses of thought seem'd flashing through his brain,
Like wildfires flitting o'er the rank morass,
Snares to the night-bewilder'd traveller!
Gently he raised his head, and peep'd around,
As if he hoped to see some pleasant object,
— The wingless squirrel jet from tree to tree,
— The monkey pilfering a parrot's nest,
But, ere he bore the precious spoil away,

Surprised behind by beaks, and wings; and claws,
That made him scamper gibbering away;
— The sly opossum dangle by her tail,
To snap the silly birds that perch'd too near;
Or in the thicket, with her young at play,
Start when the rustling grass announced a snake,
And secrete them within her second womb,
Then stand alert to give the intruder battle,
Who rear'd his crest, and hiss'd, and glid away: —
— These with the transport of a child he view'd,
Then laugh'd aloud, and crack'd his fingers, smote
His palms, and clasp'd his knees, convulsed with glee;
A sad, sad spectacle of merriment!
Yet he was happy; happy in this life;
And could I doubt, that death to him would bring
Intelligence, which he had ne'er abused,
A soul, which he had never lost by sin?

I saw a woman, panting from her throes,
Stretch'd in a lonely cabin on the ground,
Pale with the anguish of her bitter hour,
Whose sorrow she forgat not in the joy,
Which mothers feel when a man-child is born;
Hers was an infant of her own scorn'd sex:
It lay upon her breast;— she laid it there,
By the same instinct, which taught it to find
The milky fountain, fill'd to meet its wants
Even at the gate of life,— to drink and live.
Awhile she lay all-passive to the touch
Of those small fingers, and the soft, soft lips
Soliciting the sweet nutrition thence;
While yearning sympathy crept round her heart:
She felt her spirit yielding to the charm,
That wakes the parent in the fellest bosom,
And binds her to her little one for ever,
If once completed;— but she broke, she broke it,
For she was brooding o'er her sex's wrongs,
And seem'd to lie amidst a nest of scorpions,

That stung remorse to frenzy : — forth she sprang,
And with collected might a moment stood,
Mercy and misery struggling in her thoughts,
Yet both impelling her to one dire purpose.
There was a little grave already made,
But two spans long, in the turf-floor beside her,
By him who was the father of that child :
Thence he had sallied, when the work was done,
To hunt, to fish, or ramble on the hills,
Till all was peace again within that dwelling,
— His haunt, his den, his any thing but home !
Peace ? — no, till the new-comer were dispatch'd
Whence it should ne'er return, to break the stupor
Of unawaken'd conscience in himself.

She pluck'd the baby from her flowing breast,
And o'er its mouth, yet moist with Nature's beverage,
Bound a thick lotus-leaf to still its cries ;
Then laid it down in that untimely grave,
As tenderly as though 'twere rock'd to sleep

With songs of love, and she afraid to wake it:
Soon as she felt it touch the ground, she started,
Hurried the damp earth over it; then fell
Flat on the heaving heap, and crush'd it down
With the whole burthen of her grief; exclaiming,
" O that my mother had done so to me ! "
Then in a swoon forgot, a little while,
Her child, her sex, her tyrant, and herself.

Amazement wither'd up all human feeling;
I wonder'd how I could look on so calmly,
As though I were but animated stone,
And not kneel down upon the spot, and pray
That earth might open to devour that mother,
Or heaven shoot lightning to avenge that daughter;
But horror soon gave way to hope and pity,
— Hope for the dead, and pity for the living.
Thenceforth when I beheld troops of wild children
Frolicking round the tents of wickedness,
Though my heart danced within me to the music

Of their loud voices and unruly mirth,
The blithe exuberance of beginning life!
I could not weep when they went out like sparks,
That glitter, creep, and dwindle out, on tinder.
Happy, thrice happy were they thus to die,
Rather than grow into such men and women,
— Such fiends incarnate as that felon-sire,
Who dug its grave before his child was born;
Such miserable wretches as that mother,
Whose tender mercies were so deadly cruel!

I saw their infant's spirit rise to heaven,
Caught from its birth up to the throne of God;
There, thousands and ten thousands, I beheld,
Of innocents like this, that died untimely,
By violence of their unnatural kin,
Or by the mercy of that gracious Power,
Who gave them being, taking what He gave
Ere they could sin or suffer like their parents.
I saw them in white raiment, crown'd with flowers,

On the fair banks of that resplendent river,
Whose streams make glad the city of our God;
— Water of life, as clear as crystal, welling
Forth from the throne itself, and visiting
Fields of a Paradise that ne'er was lost;
Where yet the tree of life immortal grows,
And bears its monthly fruits, twelve kinds of fruit,
Each in its season, food of saints and angels;
Whose leaves are for the healing of the nations.
Beneath the shadow of its blessed boughs,
I mark'd those rescued infants, in their schools,
By spirits of just men made perfect, taught
The glorious lessons of almighty love,
Which brought them thither by the readiest path
From the world's wilderness of dire temptations,
Securing thus their everlasting weal.

Yea, in the rapture of that hour, though songs
Of cherubim to golden lyres and trumpets,
And the redeem'd upon the sea of glass,

With voices like the sound of many waters,
Came on mine ear, whose secret cells were open'd
To entertain celestial harmonies,
— The small, sweet accents of those little children,
Pouring out all the gladness of their souls
In love, joy, gratitude, and praise to Him,
— Him, who had loved and wash'd them in his blood;
These were to me the most transporting strains,
Amidst the hallelujahs of all heaven. —
Though lost awhile in that amazing chorus
Around the throne, — at happy intervals,
The shrill hosannas of the infant choir,
Singing in that eternal temple, brought
Tears to mine eye, which seraphs had been glad
To weep, could they have felt the sympathy
That melted all my soul, when I beheld
How condescending Deity thus deign'd,
Out of the mouths of babes and sucklings here,
To perfect his high praise: — the harp of heaven

Had lack'd its least but not its meanest string,
Had children not been taught to play upon it,
And sing, from feelings all their own, what men
"Nor angels can conceive of creatures, born
Under the curse, yet from the curse redeem'd,
And placed at once beyond the power to fall,
— Safety which men nor angels ever knew,
Till ranks of these and all of those had fallen.

THE

PELICAN ISLAND.

CANTO EIGHTH.

'Twas but the vision of an eye-glance; gone
Ere thought could fix upon it, — gone like lightning
At midnight, when the expansive flash reveals
Alps, Apennines, and Pyrenees, in one
Glorious horizon, suddenly lit up, —
Rocks, rivers, forests, — quench'd as suddenly:
A glimpse that fill'd the mind with images,
Which years cannot obliterate; but stamp'd
With instantaneous everlasting force
On memory's more than adamantine tablet; —

A glimpse of that which eye hath never seen,
Ear heard, nor heart of man conceived. — It pass'd,
But what it shew'd can never pass. — It pass'd,
And left me wandering through that land of exile,
Cut off from intercourse with happier lands;
Abandon'd, as it seem'd, by its Creator;
Unvisited by Him, who came from heaven
To seek and save the lost of every clime;
And where God, looking down in wrath, had said,
" My Spirit shall no longer strive with man: "
— So ignorance or unbelief might deem.

Was it thus outlaw'd? No; God left himself
Not without witness of his presence there;
He gave them rain from heaven and fruitful seasons,
Filling unthankful hearts with food and gladness.
He gave them kind affections which they strangled,
Turning his grace into lasciviousness.
He gave them powers of intellect, to scale
Heaven's height; to name and number all the stars;

To penetrate earth's depths for hidden riches,
Or clothe its surface with fertility;
Amidst the haunts of dragons, dens of satyrs,
To call up hamlets, villages, and towns,
The abode of peace and industry; to build
Cities and palaces amid waste places;
To sound the ocean, combat with the winds,
Travel the waves, and compass every shore,
On voyages of commerce or adventure;
To shine in civil and refining arts,
With tranquil science elevate the soul;
To explore the universe of mind; to trace
The Nile of thinking to its secret source,
And thence pursue its infinite meanders,
Not lost amidst the labyrinths of Time,
But o'er the cataract of death down rolling,
To flow for ever, and for ever, and for ever,
Where time nor space can limit its expansion.

He gave the ideal, too, of truth and beauty;—
To look on Nature with a poet's eye,

And live, amidst the daylight of this world,
In regions of enchantment; — with the force
Of song, as with a spirit, to possess
The souls of those that hearken, till they feel
But what the minstrel feels, and do but that,
Which his strange inspiration makes them do;
Thus with his breath to kindle war, and bring
The array of battle to electric issue;
Or, while opposing legions, front to front,
Wait the dread signal for the work of havoc,
Step in between, and with the healing voice
Of harmony and concord win them so,
That hurling down their weapons of destruction,
They rush into each other's arms, with shouts
And tears of transport; till inveterate foes
Are friends and brethren, feasting on the field,
Where vultures else had feasted, and gorged wolves
Howl'd in convulsive slumber o'er their corses.

Such powers to these were given, but given in vain;
They knew them not, or, as they learn'd to know,

Perverted them to more pernicious evil,
Than ignorance had skill to perpetrate.
Yet the great Father gave a richer portion
To these, the most impoverish'd of his children;
He sent the light that lighteth every man,
That comes into the world, — the light of truth:
But Satan turn'd that light to darkness; turn'd
God's truth into a lie, and they believed
His lie, who led them captive at his will,
Usurp'd the throne of Deity on earth,
And claim'd allegiance, in all hideous forms,
— The abominable emblems of himself,
The legion-fiend, who takes whatever shape
Man's crazed imagination can devise
To body forth his notion of a God,
And prove how low immortal minds can fall,
When from the living God they fall, to serve
Dumb idols. Thus they worshipp'd stocks and stones,
Which hands unapt for sculpture executed,
In their egregious folly, like themselves,

Though not more like, even in barbarian eyes,
Than antic clouds resemble animals.
To these they offer'd flowers and fruits; to those,
Reptiles; to others, birds, and beasts, and fishes;
To some they sacrificed their enemies,
To more their children, and themselves to all.

So had the god of this apostate world
Blinded their eyes. But the true God had placed
Yet further witness of his grace among them,
When all remembrance of himself was lost:
— Knowledge of good and evil, right and wrong;
But knowledge was confounded, till they call'd
Good evil, evil good; refused the right,
And chose and loved the wrong for its own sake.
One witness more, his own ambassador
On earth, the Almighty left to be their prophet,
Whom Satan could not utterly beguile,
Nor always hold with his ten thousand fetters,
Lock'd in the dungeon of the obdurate breast,

And trampled down by all its atheist inmates;
— Conscience, tremendous conscience, in his fits
Of inspiration, — whencesoe'er it came, —
Rose like a ghost, inflicting fear of death,
On those who fear'd not death in fiercest battle,
And mock'd him in their martyrdoms of torments:
That secret, swift, and silent messenger
Broke on them in their lonely hours, — in sleep,
In sickness; haunting them with dire suspicions
Of something in themselves that would not die, —
Of an existence elsewhere, and hereafter,
Of which tradition was not wholly silent,
Yet spake not out; its dreary oracles
Confounded superstition to conceive,
And baffled scepticism to reject:
— What fear of death is like the fear beyond it?

But pangs like these were lucid intervals
In the delirium of the life they led,
And all unwelcome as returning reason,

Which through the chaos of a maniac's brain
Shoots gleams of light more terrible than darkness.
These sad misgivings of the smitten heart,
Wounded unseen by conscience from its ambush;
These voices from eternity, that spake
To an eternity of soul within, —
Were quickly lull'd by riotous enjoyment,
Or lost in hurricanes of headlong passion.
They knew no higher, sought no happier state;
Had no fine instinct of superior joys
Than those of sense; no taste for sense refined
Above the gross necessities of nature,
Or outraged Nature's most unnatural cravings.
Why should they toil to make the earth bring forth,
When without toil she gave them all they wanted?
The bread-fruit ripen'd, while they lay beneath
Its shadow in luxurious indolence;
The cocoa fill'd its nuts with milk and kernels,
While they were sauntering on the shores and
mountains;

And while they slumber'd from their heavy meals,
In dead forgetfulness of life itself,
The fish were spawning in unsounded depths,
The birds were breeding in adjacent trees,
The game was fattening in delicious pastures,
Unplanted roots were thriving under ground,
To spread the tables of their future banquets!

Thus what the sires had been, the sons became,
And generations rose, continued, went,
Without memorial, — like the Pelicans
On that lone island, where they built their nests,
Nourish'd their young, and then lay down to die:
Hence through a thousand and a thousand years,
Man's history, in that region of oblivion,
Might be recorded in a page as small
As the brief legend of those Pelicans,
With one appalling, one sublime distinction,
(Sublime with horror, with despair appalling,)
— That Pelicans were not transgressors; — Man,

Apostate from the womb, by blood a traitor.
Thus, while he rose by dignity of birth,
He sunk in guilt and infamy below
Creatures, whose being was but lent, not given,
And, when the debt was due, reclaim'd for ever.
O enviable lot of innocence!
Their bliss and woe were only of this world:
Whate'er their lives had been, though born to suffer
Not less than to enjoy, their end was peace.
Man was immortal, yet he lived and died
As though there were no life, nor death, but this:
Alas! what life or death may be hereafter,
He only knows who hath ordain'd them both;
And they shall know who prove their truth for ever.

The thought was agony beyond endurance;
" O thou, my brother Man!" again I cried,
" Would God, that I might live, might die for thee!
O could I take a form to meet thine eyes,
Invent a voice with words to reach thine ears;

Or if my spirit might converse with thine,
And pour my thoughts, fears, feelings, through thy
breast,
Unknown to thee whence came the strange in-
trusion!
How would my soul rejoice, rejoice with trembling,
To tell thee who thou art, and bring thee home,
— Poor prodigal, here watching swine, and fain
To glut thy hunger with the husks they feed on,—
Home to our Father's house, our Father's heart!
Both, both are open to receive thee, — come;
O come! — He hears not, heeds not, — O my brother!
That I might prophesy to thee, — to all
The millions of dry bones that fill this valley
Of darkness and despair! — Alas! alas!
Can these bones live? Lord God, Thou knowest.
— Come
From the four winds of heaven, almighty breath,
Blow on these slain, and they shall live."

I spake,
And turning from the mournful contemplation,
To seek refreshment for my weary spirit,
Amidst that peopled continent, the abode
Of misery which reach'd beyond this world,
I lighted on a solitary glen
(A peaceful refuge in a land of discord)
Crown'd with steep rocks, whose hoary summits shone
Amid the blue unclouded element,
O'er the green woods, that, stretching down the hills,
Border'd the narrow champaign glade between,
Through which a clear and pebbly rill meander'd.
The song-birds caroll'd in the leafy shades,
Those of resplendent plumage flaunted round;
High o'er the cliffs the sea-fowl soar'd or perch'd;
The Pelican and Albatross were seen
In groupes reposing on the northern ridge:
There was entire serenity above,
Beauty, tranquillity, delight below,
And every motion, sound, and sight were pleasing.

Rhinoceros nor wild bull pastured here;
Lion nor tiger here shed innocent blood;
The antelopes were grazing void of fear,
Their young in antic gambols ramping by;
While goats, from precipice to precipice
Clamber'd, or hung, or vaulted through the air,
As if a thought convey'd them to and fro.
Harmony reign'd, as once ere man's creation,
When brutes were yet earth's sole inhabitants.
There were no human tracks nor dwellings there,
For 'twas a sanctuary from hurtful creatures,
And in the precincts of that happy dell
The absence of my species was a mercy:
Thence the declining sun withdrew his beams,
But left it lighted by a hundred peaks,
Glittering and golden, round the span of sky,
That seem'd the sapphire roof of one great temple,
Whose floor was emerald, and whose walls the hills;
Where those that worshipp'd God, might worship Him
In spirit and in truth, without distraction.

Man's absence pleased me ; yet on man alone,
Man fallen, helpless, miserable man,
My thoughts, prayers, wishes, tears, and sorrows turn'd,
Howe'er I strove to drive away remembrance :
Then I refrain'd no longer, but brake out,
—" Lord God, why hast Thou made all men in vain?"

THE

PELICAN ISLAND.

CANTO NINTH.

THE countenance of one advanced in years,
The shape of one created to command,
The step of one accustom'd to be seen,
And follow'd with the reverence of all eyes,
Yet conscious here of utter solitude,
Came on me like an apparition, — whence
I knew not, — halfway down the vale already
Had he proceeded ere I caught his eye,
And in that mirror of intelligence,
By the sure divination of mine art,

Read the mute history of his former life,
And all the untold secrets of his bosom.

He was a chieftain of renown; from youth
To green old age, the glory of his tribe,
The terror of their enemies; in war
An Alexander, and in peace an Alfred.
From morn till night he wont to wield the spear
With indefatigable arm, or watch
From eve till dawn in ambush for his quarry,
Human or brute; not less in chase than fight,
For strength, skill, prowess, enterprise unrivall'd.
Fearless he grappled with the fell hyæna,
And held him strangling in the grasp of fate;
He seized the she-bear's whelps, and when the dam
With miserable cries and insane rage
Pursued to rescue them, would turn and strike
One blow, but one, to break her heart for ever:
From sling and bow, he sent upon death-errands
The stone or arrow through the trackless air,

To overtake the fleetest foot, or lay
The loftiest pinion fluttering in the dust.
On the rough waves he eagerly embark'd,
Assail'd the stranded whale among the breakers,
Dart after dart with such sure aim implanting
In the huge carcass of the helpless victim,
That soon in blood and foam the monster breath'd
His last, and lay a hulk upon the reef;
Thence floated by the rising tide, and tow'd
By a whole navy of canoes ashore.

But 'twas the hero's mind that made him great;
His eye, his lip, his hand, were clothed with thunder:
Thrones, crowns, and sceptres give not more ascendence,
Back'd with arm'd legions, fortified with towers,
Than this imperial savage, all alone,
From Nature's pure beneficence derived.
Yet, when the hey-day of hot youth was over,
His soul grew gentle as the halcyon breeze,
Sent from the evening-sea to bless the shore,

After the fervours of a tropic noon;
Nor less benign his influence than fresh showers
Upon the fainting wilderness, where bands
Of pilgrims, bound for Mecca, with their camels,
Lie down to die together in despair,
When the deceitful *mirage*, that appear'd
A pool of water trembling in the sun,
Hath vanish'd from the bloodshot eye of thirst.
Firm in defence as valiant in the battle,
Assailing none, but all assaults repelling
With such determined chastisement, that foes
No longer dar'd to forage on his borders,
War shrunk from his dominions; simple laws,
Yet wise and equitable, he ordain'd
To rule a willing and obedient people.
Blood ceased to flow in sacrifice; no more
The parents' hands were raised against their children,
Children no longer slew their aged parents;
Man prey'd not on his fellow-man, within
The hallow'd circle of his patriarch-sway,

That seem'd amidst barbarian clans around
A garden in a waste of brier and hemlock.

Ere life's meridian, thus that chief had reach'd
The utmost pinnacle of savage grandeur,
And stood the envy of ignoble eyes,
The awe of humbler mortals, the example
Of youth's sublime ambition; but to him,
It was not given to rest at any height;
The thoughts that travel to eternity
Already had begun their pilgrimage,
Which time, nor change, nor life, nor death, could stop.
All that he saw, heard, felt, or could conceive,
Open'd new scenes of mental enterprise,
Imposed new tasks for arduous contemplation.
On the steep eminence which he had scaled
To rise or fall were sole alternatives;
He might not stand, and he disdain'd to fall;
Innate magnificence of mind upheld,

And buoyancy of genius bore him on.
Heaven, earth, and ocean, were to him familiar
In all their motions, aspects, changes; each
To him paid tribute of the knowledge, hid
From unenquiring ignorance; to him
Their gradual secrets, though with slow reserve,
Yet sure accumulation, all reveal'd.

But whence they came, even more than what
they were,
Awaken'd wonder, and defied conjecture;
Blank wonder could not satisfy his soul,
And resolute conjecture would not yield,
Though foil'd a thousand times, in speculation
On themes that open'd immortality.
The gods whom his deluded countrymen
Acknowledged, were no gods to him; he scorn'd
The impotence of skill that carved such figures,
And pitied the fatuity of those,
Who saw not in the abortions of their hands

The abortions of their minds. — 'Twas the Creator
He sought through every volume open to him,
From the small leaf that holds an insect's web,
From which ere long a colony shall issue,
With wings and limbs as perfect as the eagle's,
To the stupendous ocean, that gives birth
And nourishment to everlasting millions
Of creatures, great and small, beyond the power
Of man to comprehend how they exist.
One thought amidst the multitude within him
Press'd with perpetual, with increasing weight,
And yet the elastic soul beneath its burthen
Wax'd strong and stronger, was enlarged, exalted,
With the necessity of bearing up
Against annihilation; for that seem'd
The only refuge were this hope foregone:
It was as though he wrestled with an angel,
And would not let him go without a blessing,
If not extort the secret of his name:
This was that thought, that hope; — dumb idols,

And the vain homage of their worshippers,
Were proofs to him, not less than sun and stars,
That there were beings mightier far than man,
Or man had never dream'd of aught above him:
'Twas clear to him as was his own existence,
In which he felt the fact personified,
That man himself was for this world too mighty,
Possessing powers which could not ripen here,
But ask'd infinity to bring them forth,
And find employ for their unbounded scope.

Tradition told him, that, in ancient time,
Sky, sun, and sea were all the universe;
The sun grew tired of gazing on the sea,
Day after day; then, with descending beams,
Day after day he pierced the dark abyss,
Till he had reach'd its diamantine floor;
Whence he drew up an island, as a tree
Grows in the desert from some random seed,
Dropt by a wild bird. Grain by grain it rose,

And touch'd at length the surface; there expanding
Beneath the fostering influence of his eye,
Prolific seasons, light, and showers, and dew,
Aided by earthquakes, hurricanes, volcanos,
(All agents of the universal sun,)
Conspired to form, advance, enrich, and break
The level reef, till hills and dales appear'd,
And the small isle became a continent,
Whose bounds his ancestors had never traced.
Thither in time, by means inscrutable,
Plants, animals, and man himself were brought;
And with the idolaters the gods they served.
These tales tradition told him; he believed,
Though all were fables, yet they shadow'd truth;
That truth with heart, soul, mind, and strength he sought.
O 'twas a spectacle for angels, bound
On embassies of mercy to this earth,
To gaze on, with compassion and delight,
— Yea, with desire that they might be his helpers, —

To see a dark endungeon'd spirit roused,
And struggling into glorious liberty,
Though Satan's legions watch'd at every portal,
And held him by ten thousand manacles!

Such was the being whom I here descried,
And fix'd my earnest expectation on him;
For now or never might my hope be proved,
How near, by searching, man might find out God.

Thus, while he walk'd along that peaceful valley,
Though rapt in meditation far above
The world which met his senses, but in vain
Would charm his spirit within its magic circle,
— Still with benign and meek simplicity
He hearken'd to the prattle of a babe,
Which he was leading by the hand; but scarce
Could he restrain its eagerness to break
Loose, and run wild with joy among the bushes.
It was his grandson, now the only stay

Of his bereaved affections; all his kin
Had fall'n before him, and his youngest daughter
Bequeath'd this infant with her dying lips:
" O take this child, my father! take this child,
And bring it up for me; so may it live
To be the latest blessing of thy life."
He took the child; he brought it up for her;
It was the latest blessing of his life;
And while his soul explored immensity,
In search of something undefinedly great,
This infant was the link which bound that soul
To this poor world, where he had not a wish
Or hope, beyond the moment, for himself.

The little one was dancing at his side,
And dragging him with petty violence
Hither and thither from the onward path,
To find a bird's nest or to hunt a fly:
His feign'd resistance and unfeign'd reluctance
But made the boy more resolute to rule

The grandsire with his fond caprice. The sage,
Though dallying with the minion's wayward will,
His own premeditated course pursued,
And while, in tones of sportive tenderness,
He answer'd all its questions, and ask'd others
As simple as its own, yet wisely framed
To wake and prove an infant's faculties;
As though its mind were some sweet instrument,
And he, with breath and touch, were finding out
What stops or keys would yield the richest music:
— All this was by-play to the scene within
The busy theatre of his own breast.
Keen and absorbing thoughts were working there,
And his heart travail'd with unutter'd pangs;
Sigh after sigh, escaping to his lips,
Was check'd, or turn'd into some lively word,
To hide the bitter conflict from his child.

At length they struck into the woods, and thence
Climb'd the gray rocks aloof. There from his crag,

At their abrupt approach, the startled eagle
Took wing above their heads; the boy alarm'd,
— Nor less delighted when no peril came, —
Follow'd its flight with eyes and hands upraised,
And bounding forward on the verdant slope,
Watch'd it diminish, till a gnat, that cross'd
His sight, eclipsed it: when he look'd again
'Twas gone, and for an instant he felt sad,
Till some new object won his gay attention.
His grandsire stepp'd to take the eagle's stand,
And gaze at freedom on the boundless prospect,
But started back, and held his breath with awe,
So suddenly, so gloriously it broke
From heaven, earth, sea, and air, at once upon him.
The tranquil ocean roll'd beneath his feet;
The shores on each hand lessen'd from the view;
The landscape glow'd with tropical luxuriance;
The sky was fleck'd with gold and crimson clouds,
That seem'd to emanate from nothing there,
Born in the blue and infinite expanse,

Where just before the eye might seek in vain
An evening shadow as a daylight star.

There stood the patriarch amidst a scene
Of splendour and beatitude; himself
A diadem of glory o'er the whole,
For none but he could comprehend the beauty,
The bliss diffused throughout the universe;
Yet holier beauty, higher bliss he sought,
Of which that universe was but the veil,
Wrought with inexplicable hieroglyphics.
Here then he stood, alone but not forsaken
Of Him, without whose leave a sparrow falls not.
Wide open lay the Book of Deity,
The page was Providence: but none, alas!
Had taught him letters; when he look'd, he wept
To feel himself forbidden to peruse it.
— " O for a messenger of mercy now,
Like Philip when he join'd the Eunuch's chariot!

O for the privilege to burst upon him,
And show the blind, the dead, the light of life!"

I hush'd the exclamation, for he seem'd
To hear it; turn'd his head, and look'd all round,
As if an eye invisible beheld him,
A voice had spoken out of solitude:
— Yea such an eye beheld him, such a voice
Had spoken; but they were not mine; his life
He would have yielded on the spot, to see
That eye; to hear that voice, and understand it:
It was the eye of God, the voice of Nature.
All in a moment on his knees he fell;
And with imploring arms, outstretch'd to heaven,
And eyes no longer wet with hopeless tears,
But beaming forth sublime intelligence;
In words through which his heart's pulsation throbb'd,
And made mine tremble to their accents, — pray'd:
— "Oh! if there be a Power above all power,
A Light above all light, a Name above

All other names, in heaven and earth; that Power,
That Light, that Name I call upon." — He paused,
Bowd his hoar head with reverence, closed his eyes,
And with clasp'd hands upon his breast, began
In under-tones, that rose in fervency,
Like incense kindled on a holy altar,
Till his whole soul became one tongue of fire,
Of which these words were faint and poor expressions:
— " Oh! if Thou art, Thou knowest that I am:
Behold me, hear me, pity me, despise not
The prayer, which — if Thou art — Thou hast inspired,
Or wherefore seek I now a God unknown?
And feel for Thee, if haply I may find
In whom I live and move and have my being?
Reveal Thyself to me; reveal thy power,
Thy light, thy name, — that I may fear, adore,
Obey, — and, oh! that I might love Thee too!
For, if Thou art — it must be — Thou art good;
And I would be the creature of thy goodness:

Oh! hear and answer;— let me know Thou hearest!
— Know that as surely as thou art, so surely
My prayer and supplication are accepted."

He waited silently; there came no answer:
The roaring of the tide beneath, the gale
Rustling the forest-leaves, the notes of birds,
And hum of insects, — these were all the sounds,
That met familiarly around his ear.
He look'd abroad; there shone no light from heaven
But that of sunset; and no shapes appear'd
But glistering clouds, which melted through the sky
As imperceptibly as they had come;
While all terrestrial objects seem'd the same
As he had ever known them; — still he look'd
And listen'd, till a cold sick feeling sunk
Into his heart, and blighted every hope.

Anon faint accents, from the sloping lawn
Beneath the crag where he was kneeling, rose,

Like supernatural echoes of his prayer:
— " A Name above all names, — I call upon. —
Thou art — Thou knowest that I am: — Reveal
Thyself to me; — but, oh! that I may love Thee!
For if Thou art, Thou must be good: — Oh! hear,
And let me know thou hearest!" — Memory fail'd
The child; for 'twas his grandchild, though he knew not,
— In the deep transport of his mind, he knew not
That voice, to him the sweetest of ten thousand,
And known the best, because the best beloved.
Again it cried: — " Thou art — Thou must be good: — Oh! hear,
And let me know Thou hearest." — Memory fail'd
The child, but feeling fail'd not; tears of light
Slid down his cheek; he too was on his knees,
Clasping his little hands upon his heart,
Unconscious why, yet doing what he saw
His grandsire do, and saying what he said.
For while he gather'd buds and flowers, to twine

A garland for the old gray hairs, whose locks
Were lovelier in his sight than all the blooms
On which the bees and butterflies were feasting,
The Patriarch's agony of spirit caught
His eye, his ear, his heart; he dropt the flowers,
And kneeling down among them, wept and pray'd
Like him, with whom he felt such strange emotions
As rapt his infant-soul to heavenly heights;
Though whence they sprang, and what they meant,
he knew not;
But they were good, and that was all to him,
Who wonder'd why it was so sweet to weep;
Nor would he quit his humble attitude,
Nor cease repeating fragments of that lesson,
Thus learnt spontaneonsly from lips, whose words
Were almost dearer to him than their kisses,
When on his lap the old man dandled him,
And told him simple stories of his mother.

Recovering thought, the venerable sire
Beheld, and recognized his darling boy,

Thus beautiful and innocent, engaged
In the same worship with himself. His heart
Leap'd at the sight; he flung away despondence,
While joy unspeakable and full of glory
Broke through the pagan darkness of his soul.
He ran and snatch'd the infant in his arms,
Embraced him passionately, wept aloud,
And cried, scarce knowing what he said, — "My Son!
My Son! there is a God! there is a God!"
"And, oh! that I may love Thee too!" rejoin'd
The child, whose tongue could find no other words
Than prayer; — "for if Thou art, Thou must be good."
— "He is! He is! and we will love Him too!
Yea and be like Him, — good, for He is good!"
Replied the ancient father in amazement.

Then wept they o'er each other, till the child
Exceeded, and the old man's heart reproved him

For lack of reverence in the excess of joy:
The ground itself seem'd holy! heaven and earth
Full of the presence, felt not seen, of Him,
The Power above all power, the Light above
All light, the Name above all other names;
Whom he had call'd upon, whom he had found,
Yet worshipp'd only as "the Unknown God,"—
That nearest step which uninstructed man
Can take, from Nature up to Deity.
To Him again, standing erect, he pray'd,
And while he pray'd, high in his arms he held
That dearest treasure of his heart, the child
Of his last dying daughter,—now the sole
Hope of his life, and orphan of his house.
He held him as an offering up to heaven,
A living sacrifice unto the God
Whom he invoked:—"Oh! Thou who art!" he cried,
"And hast revealed that mystery to me,
Hid from all generations of my fathers,

Or, if once known, forgotten and perverted;
I may not live to learn Thee better here;
But, oh! let this my son, mine only son,
Whom thus I dedicate to Thee; — let him,
Let him be taught thy will, and choose
Obedience to it; — may he fear thy power,
Walk in thy light, now dawning out of darkness;
And, oh! my last, last prayer, — to him reveal
The unutterable secret of thy name!"
He paused; then with the transport of a seer
Went on: — "That Name may all my nation know;
And all that hear it worship at the sound,
When thou shalt with a voice from heaven proclaim it;
And so it surely shall be."
"For Thou art;
And if Thou art, Thou must be good!" exclaim'd
The child, yet panting with the breath of prayer.

They ceased; then went rejoicing down the mountains,
Through the cool glen, where not a sound was heard,

Amidst the dark solemnity of eve,
But the loud purling of the little brook,
And the low murmur of the distant ocean.
Thence to their home beyond the hills in peace
They walk'd; and when they reach'd their humble
threshold,
The glittering firmament was full of stars.
— He died that night; his grandchild lived to see
The Patriarch's prayer and prophecy fulfill'd.

Here end my song; here ended not the vision:
I heard seven thunders uttering their voices,
And wrote what they did utter; but 'tis seal'd
Within the volume of my heart, where thoughts,
Unbodied yet in vocal words, await
The quickening warmth of poesy, to bring
Their forms to light, — like secret characters,
Invisible till open'd to the fire;
Or like the potter's paintings, colourless
Till they have pass'd to glory through the flames.

Changes more wonderful than those gone by,
More beautiful, transporting, and sublime,
To all the frail affections of our nature,
To all the immortal faculties of man;
Such changes did I witness; not alone
In one poor Pelican Island, nor on one
Barbarian continent, where man himself
Could scarcely soar above the Pelican:
— The world as it hath been in ages past,
The world as now it is, the world to come,
Far as the eye of prophecy can pierce; —
These I beheld, and still in memory's rolls
They have their pages and their pictures; these,
Another day, a nobler song may show.

Vain boast! another day may not be given;
This song may be my last; for I have reach'd
That slippery descent, whence man looks back
With melancholy joy on all he cherish'd;
Around, with love unfeign'd, on all he 's losing;

Forward, with hope that trembles while it turns
To the dim point where all our knowledge ends.
I am but one among the living; one
Among the dead I soon shall be; and one
Among unnumber'd millions yet unborn;
The sum of Adam's mortal progeny,
From Nature's birth-day to her dissolution:
— Lost in infinitude, my atom-life
Seems but a sparkle of the smallest star
Amidst the scintillations of ten thousand
Twinkling incessantly; no ray returning
To shine a second moment, where it shone
Once, and no more for ever: — so I pass.
The world grows darker, lonelier, and more silent,
As I go down into the vale of years;
For the grave's shadows lengthen in advance,
And the grave's loneliness appals my spirit,
And the grave's silence sinks into my heart,
Till I forget existence in the thought
Of non-existence, buried for a while

In the still sepulchre of my own mind,
Itself imperishable: — ah! that word,
Like the archangel's trumpet, wakes me up
To deathless resurrection. Heaven and earth
Shall pass away, but that which thinks within me —
Must think for ever; that which feels must feel:
— I am, and I can never cease to be.

O thou that readest! take this parable
Home to thy bosom; think as I have thought,
And feel as I have felt, through all the changes,
Which Time, Life, Death, the world's great actors, wrought,
While centuries swept like morning dreams before me,
And thou shalt find this moral to my song:
— Thou art, and thou canst never cease to be:
What then are time, life, death, the world to thee?
I may not answer; ask Eternity.

MISCELLANEOUS POEMS.

THE ALPS;

A REVERIE.

PART I. *Day.*

THE mountains of this glorious land
Are conscious beings to mine eye,
When at the break of day they stand
Like giants, looking through the sky,
To hail the sun's unrisen car,
That gilds their diadems of snow;
While one by one, as star by star,
Their peaks in ether glow.

Their silent presence fills my soul,
When to the horizontal ray
The many-tinctured vapours roll
In evanescent wreaths away,

And leave them naked on the scene,
The emblems of eternity,
The same as they have ever been,
And shall for ever be.

Yet through the valley while I range,
Their cliffs, like images in dreams,
Colour and shape, and station change;
Here crags and caverns, woods and streams,
And seas of adamantine ice,
With gardens, vineyards, fields embraced,
Open a way to Paradise,
Through all the splendid waste.

The goats are hanging on the rocks,
Wide through their pastures roam the herds;
Peace on the uplands feeds her flocks,
Till suddenly the king of birds
Pouncing a lamb, they start for fear;
He bears his bleating prize on high;

The well-known plaint his nestlings hear,
And raise a ravening cry.

The sun in morning freshness shines;
At noon behold his orb o'ercast;
Hollow and dreary o'er the pines,
Like distant ocean, moans the blast;
The mountains darken at the sound,
Put on their armour, and anon,
In panoply of clouds wrapt round,
Their forms from sight are gone.

Hark! war in heaven! — the battle-shout
Of thunder rends the echoing air;
Lo! war in heaven! — thick-flashing out
Through torrent-rains, red lightnings glare;
As though the Alps, with mortal ire,
At once a thousand voices raised;
And with a thousand swords of fire
At once in conflict blazed.

Part II. *Night.*

Come, golden Evening, in the west
Enthrone the storm-dispelling sun,
And let the triple rainbow rest
O'er all the mountain-tops;—'tis done;
The deluge ceases; bold and bright,
The rainbow shoots from hill to hill;
Down sinks the sun; on presses night;
—Mont Blanc is lovely still.

There take thy stand, my spirit;—spread
The world of shadows at thy feet;
And mark how calmly, overhead,
The stars like saints in glory meet:
While hid in solitude sublime,
Methinks I muse on Nature's tomb,
And hear the passing foot of Time
Step through the gloom.

All in a moment, crash on crash,
From precipice to precipice,
An avalanche's ruins dash
Down to the nethermost abyss;
Invisible, the ear alone
Follows the uproar till it dies;
Echo on echo, groan for groan,
From deep to deep replies.

Silence again the darkness seals, —
Darkness that may be felt; — but soon
The silver-clouded east reveals
The midnight spectre of the moon;
In half-eclipse she lifts her horn,
Yet, o'er the host of heaven supreme,
Brings the faint semblance of a morn
With her awakening beam.

Ha! at her touch, these Alpine heights
Unreal mockeries appear;

With blacker shadows, ghastlier lights,
Enlarging as she climbs the sphere;
A crowd of apparitions pale!
I hold my breath in chill suspense,
— They seem so exquisitely frail, —
Lest they should vanish hence.

I breathe again, I freely breathe;
Lake of Geneva! thee I trace,
Like Dian's crescent far beneath,
And beautiful as Dian's face:
Pride of this land of liberty!
All that thy waves reflect I love;
Where heaven itself, brought down to thee,
Looks fairer than above.

Safe on thy banks again I stray,
The trance of poesy is o'er,
And I am here at dawn of day,
Gazing on mountains as before;

For all the strange mutations wrought
Were magic feats of my own mind;
Thus, in the fairy-land of thought,
Whate'er I seek I find.

Yet, O ye everlasting hills!
Buildings of God, not made with hands,
Whose word performs whate'er He wills,
Whose word, though ye shall perish, stands;
Can there be eyes that look on you,
Till tears of rapture make them dim,
Nor in his works the Maker view,
Then lose his works in Him?

By me, when I behold Him not,
Or love Him not when I behold,
Be all I ever knew forgot;
My pulse stand still, my heart grow cold;

Transform'd to ice, 'twixt earth and sky,
On yonder cliff my form be seen,
That all may ask, but none reply,
What my offence hath been.

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS.

Flowers, wherefore do ye bloom?
— We strew thy pathway to the tomb.

Stars, wherefore do ye rise?
— To light thy spirit to the skies.

Fair Moon, why dost thou wane?
— That I may wax again.

O Sun, what makes thy beams so bright?
— The Word that said, — "Let there be light."

Planets, what guides you in your course?
— Unseen, unfelt, unfailing force.

Nature, whence sprang thy glorious frame?
— My Maker call'd me, and I came.

O Light, thy subtle essence who may know?
— Ask not; for all things but myself I show.

What is yon arch which every where I see?
— The sign of omnipresent Deity.

Where rests the horizon's all embracing zone?
— Where earth, God's footstool, touches heaven, his throne.

Ye clouds, what bring ye in your train?
— God's embassies, — storm, lightning, hail, or rain.

Winds, whence and whither do ye blow?
— Thou must be born again to know.

Bow in the cloud, what token dost thou bear?
— That Justice still cries "*strike*," and Mercy "*spare*."

Dews of the morning, wherefore were ye given?
— To shine on earth, then rise to heaven.

Rise, glitter, break; yet, Bubble, tell me why?
— To show the course of all beneath the sky.

Stay, Meteor, stay thy falling fire!
— No, thus shall all the host of heaven expire.

Ocean, what law thy chainless waves confined?
— That which in Reason's limits holds thy mind.

Time, whither dost thou flee?
— I travel to Eternity.

Eternity, what art thou, — say?
— Time past, time present, time to come, — *to-day*.

Ye Dead, where can your dwelling be?
— The house for all the living; — come and see.

O Life, what is thy breath?
— A vapour lost in death.

O Death, how ends thy strife?
— In everlasting life.

O Grave, where is thy victory?
— Ask Him who rose again for me.

YOUTH RENEWED.

SPRING-FLOWERS, spring-birds, spring-breezes,
Are felt, and heard, and seen;
Light trembling transport seizes
My heart, — with sighs between;
These old enchantments fill the mind
With scenes and seasons far behind;
Childhood, its smiles and tears,
Youth, with its flush of years,
Its morning-clouds and dewy prime,
More exquisitely touch'd by Time.

Fancies again are springing,
Like May-flowers in the vales;
While hopes, long lost, are singing,
From thorns, like nightingales;

And kindly spirits stir my blood,
Like vernal airs that curl the flood:
There falls to manhood's lot
A joy, which youth has not,
A dream more beautiful than truth,
— Returning Spring renewing Youth.

Thus sweetly to surrender
The present for the past;
In sprightly mood, yet tender,
Life's burthen down to cast,
— This is to taste, from stage to stage,
Youth on the lees refined by age:
Like wine well kept and long,
Heady, nor harsh, nor strong,
With every annual cup, is quaff'd
A richer, purer, mellower draught.

THE BRIDAL AND THE BURIAL.

"BLESSED is the bride whom the sun shines on;
Blessed is the corpse which the rain rains on."

I saw thee young and beautiful,
I saw thee rich and gay,
In the first blush of womanhood,
Upon thy wedding-day:
The church-bells rang,
And the little children sang, —
"Flowers, flowers, kiss her feet;
Sweets to the sweet!
The winter 's past, the rains are gone;
Blessed is the bride whom the sun shines on."

I saw thee poor and desolate,
I saw thee fade away,
In broken-hearted widowhood,
Before thy locks were gray;
The death-bell rang,
And the little children sang, —
" Lilies, dress her winding-sheet;
Sweets to the sweet;
The summer 's past, the sunshine gone;
Blessed is the corpse which the rain rains on."

" Blessed is the bride whom the sun shines on;
Blessed is the corpse which the rain rains on."

FRIENDS.

FRIEND after friend departs;
Who hath not lost a friend?
There is no union here of hearts,
That finds not here an end:
Were this frail world our only rest,
Living or dying, none were blest.

Beyond the flight of Time,
Beyond this vale of death,
There surely is some blessed clime,
Where life is not a breath,
Nor life's affections transient fire,
Whose sparks fly upward to expire.

There *is* a world above,
Where parting is unknown;
A whole eternity of love,
Form'd for the good alone;
And faith beholds the dying here
Translated to that happier sphere.

Thus star by star declines,
Till all are pass'd away,
As morning high and higher shines
To pure and perfect day;
Nor sink those stars in empty night,
— They hide themselves in heaven's own light.

A MOTHER'S LAMENT

ON THE DEATH OF HER INFANT DAUGHTER.

I Loved thee, Daughter of my heart ;
My Child, I loved thee dearly ;
And though we only met to part,
— How sweetly ! how severely ! —
Nor life, nor death can sever
My soul from thine for ever.

Thy days, my little one, were few ;
An Angel's morning visit,
That came and vanish'd with the dew ;
'Twas here, 'tis gone, where is it ?
Yet didst thou leave behind thee
A clew for love to find thee.

The eye, the lip, the cheek, the brow,
The hands stretch'd forth in gladness
All life, joy, rapture, beauty now;
Then dash'd with infant-sadness;
Till, brightening by transition,
Return'd the fairy vision: —

Where are they now? — those smiles, those tears,
Thy Mother's darling treasure?
She sees them still, and still she hears
Thy tones of pain or pleasure,
To her quick pulse revealing
Unutterable feeling.

Hush'd in a moment on her breast,
Life, at the well-spring drinking;
Then cradled on her lap to rest,
In rosy slumber sinking,
Thy dreams — no thought can guess them;
And mine — no tongue express them.

For then this waking eye could see,
In many a vain vagary,
The things that never were to be,
Imaginations airy;
Fond hopes that mothers cherish,
Like still-born babes to perish.

Mine perish'd on thy early bier;
No — changed to forms more glorious,
They flourish in a higher sphere,
O'er time and death victorious;
Yet would these arms have chain'd thee,
And long from heaven detain'd thee.

Sarah! my last, my youngest love,
The crown of every other!
Though thou art born in heaven above,
I am thine only Mother,
Nor will affection let me
Believe thou canst forget me.

Then, — thou in heaven and I on earth, —
May this one hope delight us,
That thou wilt hail my second birth,
When death shall re-unite us,
Where worlds no more can sever
Parent and child for ever.

THE

WIDOW AND THE FATHERLESS.

WELL, thou art gone, and I am left:
But, oh! how cold and dark to me
This world, of every charm bereft,
Where all was beautiful with thee!

Though I have seen thy form depart
For ever from my widow'd eye,
I hold thee in mine inmost heart;
There, there at least, thou canst not die.

Farewell on earth; Heaven claim'd its own:
Yet, when from me thy presence went,
I was exchanged for God alone:
Let dust and ashes learn content.

Ha! those small voices silver-sweet!
Fresh from the fields my babes appear;
They fill my arms, they clasp my feet;
—"Oh! could your father see us here!"

THE DAISY IN INDIA.

Supposed to be addressed by the Reverend Dr. CAREY, the learned and illustrious Baptist Missionary at Serampore, to the first plant of this kind, which sprang up unexpectedly in his garden, out of some English earth, in which other seeds had been conveyed to him from this country. With great care and nursing, the Doctor has been enabled to perpetuate the Daisy in India, as an annual only, raised by seed preserved from season to season.

THRICE welcome, little English flower!
My mother-country's white and red,
In rose or lily, till this hour,
Never to me such beauty spread·
Transplanted from thine island-bed
A treasure in a grain of earth,
Strange as a spirit from the dead,
Thine embryo sprang to birth.

Thrice welcome, little English flower!
Whose tribes, beneath our natal skies,
Shut close their leaves while vapours lower;
But, when the sun's gay beams arise,
With unabash'd but modest eyes,
Follow his motion to the west,
Nor cease to gaze till daylight dies,
Then fold themselves to rest.

Thrice welcome, little English flower,
To this resplendent hemisphere,
Where Flora's giant offspring tower
In gorgeous liveries all the year;
Thou, only thou, art little here,
Like worth unfriended and unknown,
Yet to my British heart more dear
Than all the torrid zone.

Thrice welcome, little English flower!
Of early scenes beloved by me,

While happy in my father's bower,
Thou shalt the blithe memorial be;
The fairy sports of infancy,
Youth's golden age, and manhood's prime,
Home, country, kindred, friends, — with thee,
I find in this far clime.

Thrice welcome, little English flower!
I 'll rear thee with a trembling hand:
Oh, for the April sun and shower,
The sweet May dews of that fair land,
Where Daisies, thick as star-light, stand
In every walk! — that here may shoot
Thy scions, and thy buds expand,
A hundred from one root.

Thrice welcome, little English flower!
To me the pledge of hope unseen;
When sorrow would my soul o'erpower
For joys that were, or might have been,

I'll call to mind, how, fresh and green,
I saw thee waking from the dust;
Then turn to heaven with brow serene,
And place in God my trust.

THE DROUGHT.

Written in the summer of 1826. *Hosea*, ii. 21, 22.

WHAT strange, what fearful thing hath come to pass?
The ground is iron, and the heavens are brass;
Man on the withering harvests casts his eye,
"Give me your fruits in season or I die;"
The timely Fruits implore their parent Earth,
"Where is thy strength to bring us forth to birth?"
The Earth, all prostrate, to the Clouds complains,
"Send to my heart your fertilizing rains;"
The Clouds invoke the Heavens,—"Collect, dispense
Through us your quickening, healing influence;"

The Heavens to Him that made them raise their moan,
" Command thy blessing, and it shall be done :"
The Lord is in his temple ; — hush'd and still,
The suppliant Universe awaits his will.

He speaks; and to the Clouds the Heavens dispense,
With lightning-speed, their genial influence;
The gathering, breaking Clouds pour down their rains,
Earth drinks the bliss through all her eager veins;
From teeming furrows start the Fruits to birth,
And shake their treasures on the lap of Earth;
Man sees the harvests grow beneath his eye,
Turns, and looks up with rapture to the sky;
All that have breath and being now rejoice;
All Nature's voices blend in one great voice,
" Glory to God, who thus himself makes known!"
— When shall all tongues confess Him God alone?

Lord, as the rain comes down from Heaven; — ..
the rain,
Which waters Earth, nor thence returns in vain,
But makes the tree to bud, the grass to spring,
And feeds and gladdens every living thing;
So may thy word, upon a world destroy'd,
Come down in blessing, and return not void;
So may it come in universal showers,
And fill Earth's dreariest wilderness with flowers,
— With flowers of promise fill the world, within
Man's heart, laid waste and desolate by sin;
Where thorns and thistles curse the infested ground,
Let the rich fruits of righteousness abound;
And trees of life, for ever fresh and green,
Flourish where trees of death alone have been;
Let Truth look down from heaven, Hope soar
aboye,
Justice and Mercy kiss, Faith work by Love;
Nations new-born their fathers' idols spurn;
The Ransom'd of the Lord with songs return;

Heralds the year of Jubilee proclaim;
Bow every knee at the Redeemer's name;
O'er lands, with darkness, thraldom, guilt, o'erspread,
In light, joy, freedom, be the Spirit shed;
Speak Thou the word; to Satan's power say, "Cease,"
But to a world of pardon'd sinners, " Peace."
— Thus in thy grace, Lord God, Thyself make known;
Then shall all tongues confess Thee God alone.

THE STRANGER AND HIS FRIEND.

" *Ye have done it unto me.*" — Matt. xxv. 40.

A POOR wayfaring Man of grief
Hath often cross'd me on my way,
Who sued so humbly for relief,
That I could never answer, " Nay :"
I had not power to ask his name,
Whither he went, or whence he came,
Yet was there something in his eye,
That won my love, I knew not why.

Once, when my scanty meal was spread,
He enter'd ; — not a word he spake ; —

Just perishing for want of bread;
I gave him all; he bless'd it, brake,
And ate, — but gave me part again;
Mine was an Angel's portion then,
For while I fed with eager haste,
That crust was manna to my taste.

I spied him, where a fountain burst
Clear from the rock; his strength was gone;
The heedless water mock'd his thirst,
He heard it, saw it hurrying on:
I ran to raise the sufferer up;
Thrice from the stream he drain'd my cup,
Dipt, and return'd it running o'er;
I drank, and never thirsted more.

'Twas night; the floods were out; it blew
A winter hurricane aloof;
I heard his voice abroad, and flew
To bid him welcome to my roof;

I warm'd, I clothed, I cheer'd my guest,
Laid him on my own couch to rest;
Then made the hearth my bed, and seem'd
In Eden's garden while I dream'd.

Stript, wounded, beaten, nigh to death,
I found him by the highway-side:
I roused his pulse, brought back his breath,
Revived his spirit, and supplied
Wine, oil, refreshment; he was heal'd;
I had myself a wound conceal'd;
But from that hour forgot the smart,
And Peace bound up my broken heart.

In prison I saw him next, condemn'd
To meet a traitor's doom at morn;
The tide of lying tongues I stemm'd,
And honour'd him 'midst shame and scorn:
My friendship's utmost zeal to try,
He ask'd, if I for him would die;

The flesh was weak, my blood ran chill,
But the free spirit cried, "I will."

Then in a moment to my view
The Stranger darted from disguise;
The tokens in his hands I knew,
My Saviour stood before mine eyes:
He spake; and my poor name He named;
"Of me thou hast not been ashamed:
These deeds shall thy memorial be;
Fear not, thou didst them unto Me."

A SEA PIECE;

IN THREE SONNETS.

Scene. — *Bridlington Quay*, 1824.

I.

At nightfall, walking on the cliff-crown'd shore,
Where sea and sky were in each other lost;
Dark ships were scudding through the wild uproar,
Whose wrecks ere morn must strew the dreary coast;
I mark'd one well-moor'd vessel tempest-tost,
Sails reef'd, helm lash'd, a dreadful siege she bore,
Her deck by billow after billow cross'd,
While every moment she might be no more:
Yet firmly anchor'd on the nether sand,
Like a chain'd Lion ramping at his foes,
Forward and rearward still she plunged and rose,
Till broke her cable; — then she fled to land,
With all the waves in chase; throes following throes;
She 'scaped,—she struck,—she stood upon the strand.

II.

The morn was beautiful, the storm gone by;
Three days had pass'd; I saw the peaceful main,
One molten mirror, one illumined plane,
Clear as the blue, sublime, o'erarching sky:
On shore that lonely vessel caught mine eye,
Her bow was sea-ward, all equipt her train,
Yet to the sun she spread her wings in vain,
Like a chain'd Eagle, impotent to fly;
There fix'd as if for ever to abide;
Far down the beach had roll'd the low neap-tide,
Whose mingling murmur faintly lull'd the ear:
"Is this," methought, "is this the doom of pride,
Check'd in the onset of thy brave career,
Ingloriously to rot by piece-meal here?"

III.

Spring-tides return'd, and Fortune smiled; the bay
Received the rushing ocean to its breast;
While waves on waves innumerably prest,
Seem'd, with the prancing of their proud array,
Sea-horses, flash'd with foam, and snorting spray;
Their power and thunder broke that vessel's rest;
Slowly, with new expanding life possest,
To her own element she glid away;
Buoyant and bounding like the polar Whale,
That takes his pastime; every joyful sail
Was to the freedom of the wind unfurl'd,
While right and left the parted surges curl'd:
— Go, gallant Bark, with such a tide and gale,
I 'll pledge thee to a voyage round the world.

ROBERT BURNS.

WHAT bird in beauty, flight, or song,
Can with the Bard compare,
Who sang as sweet, and soar'd as strong,
As ever child of air?

His plume, his note, his form, could BURNS,
For whim or pleasure change;
He was not one, but all by turns,
With transmigration strange.

The Blackbird, oracle of spring,
When flow'd his moral lay;
The Swallow wheeling on the wing,
Capriciously at play:

The Humming-Bird, from bloom to bloom,
Inhaling heavenly balm;
The Raven, in the tempest's gloom;
The Halcyon, in the calm:

In "auld Kirk Alloway," the Owl,
At witching time of night;
By "bonnie Doon," the earliest Fowl
That caroll'd to the light.

He was the Wren amidst the grove,
When in his homely vein;
At Bannockburn the Bird of Jove,
With thunder in his train:

The Woodlark, in his mournful hours;
The Goldfinch, in his mirth;
The Thrush, a spendthrift of his powers,
Enrapturing heaven and earth;

The Swan, in majesty and grace,
Contemplative and still;
But roused, — no Falcon, in the chase,
Could like his satire kill.

The Linnet in simplicity,
In tenderness the Dove;
But more than all beside was he,
The Nightingale in love.

Oh! had he never stoop'd to shame,
Nor lent a charm to vice,
How had Devotion loved to name
That Bird of Paradise!

Peace to the dead! — In Scotia's choir
Of Minstrels great and small,
He sprang from his spontaneous fire,
The Phœnix of them all.

A THEME FOR A POET.

1814.

THE arrow that shall lay me low,
Was shot from Death's unerring bow,
The moment of my breath;
And every footstep I proceed,
It tracks me with increasing speed;
I turn, — it meets me, — Death
Has given such impulse to that dart,
It points for ever at my heart.

And soon of me it must be said,
That I have lived, that I am dead;
Of all I leave behind,
A few may weep a little while,

Then bless my memory with a smile;
What monument of mind
Shall I bequeath to deathless Fame,
That after-times may love my name?

Let Southey sing of war's alarms,
The pride of battle, din of arms,
The glory and the guilt, —
Of nations barb'rously enslaved,
Of realms by patriot valour saved,
Of blood insanely spilt,
And millions sacrificed to fate,
To make one little mortal great.

Let Scott, in wilder strains, delight
To chant the Lady and the Knight,
The tournament, the chase,
The wizard's deed without a name,
Perils by ambush, flood, and flame;
Or picturesquely trace

The hills that form a world on high,
The lake that seems a downward sky.

Let Byron, with untrembling hand,
Impetuous foot and fiery brand,
Lit at the flames of hell,
Go down and search the human heart,
Till fiends from every corner start,
Their crimes and plagues to tell;
Then let him fling the torch away,
And sun his soul in heaven's pure day.

Let Wordsworth weave, in mystic rhyme,
Feelings ineffably sublime,
And sympathies unknown;
Yet so our yielding breasts enthral,
His Genius shall possess us all,
His thoughts become our own,
And, strangely pleased, we start to find
Such hidden treasures in *our* mind.

Let Campbell's sweeter numbers flow
Through every change of joy and woe;
Hope's morning dreams display,
The Pennsylvanian cottage wild,
The frenzy of O'Connel's child,
Or Linden's dreadful day;
And still in each new form appear,
To every Muse and Grace more dear.

Transcendent Masters of the lyre!
Not to your honours I aspire;
Humbler yet higher views
Have touch'd my spirit into flame;
The pomp of fiction I disclaim;
Fair Truth! be thou my muse;
Reveal in splendour deeds obscure,
Abase the proud, exalt the poor.

I sing the men who left their home,
Amidst barbarian hordes to roam,

'Who land and ocean cross'd,
Led by a load-star, mark'd on high
By Faith's unseen, all-seeing eye, —
To seek and save the lost;
Where'er the curse on Adam spread,
To call his offspring from the dead.

Strong in the great Redeemer's name,
They bore the cross, despised the shame;
And, like their Master here,
Wrestled with danger, pain, distress,
Hunger, and cold, and nakedness,
And every form of fear;
To feel his love their only joy,
To tell that love their sole employ.

O Thou, who wast in Bethlehem born,
The man of sorrows and of scorn,
Jesus, the sinners' Friend!

— O Thou, enthroned in filial right,
Above all creature-power and might;
Whose kingdom shall extend,
Till earth, like heaven, thy name shall fill,
And men, like angels, do thy will: —

Thou, whom I love, but cannot see,
My Lord, my God! look down on me;
My low affections raise;
The spirit of liberty impart,
Enlarge my soul, inflame my heart,
And, while I spread thy praise,
Shine on my path, in mercy shine,
Prosper my work, and make it thine.

NIGHT.

NIGHT is the time for rest;
How sweet, when labours close,
To gather round an aching breast
The curtain of repose,
Stretch the tired limbs, and lay the head
Down on our own delightful bed!

Night is the time for dreams;
The gay romance of life,
When truth that is, and truth that seems,
Mix in fantastic strife:
Ah! visions, less beguiling far
Than waking dreams by daylight are!

Night is the time for toil;
To plough the classic field,
Intent to find the buried spoil
Its wealthy furrows yield;
Till all is ours that sages taught,
That poets sang, and heroes wrought.

Night is the time to weep;
To wet with unseen tears
Those graves of memory, where sleep
The joys of other years;
Hopes, that were Angels at their birth,
But died when young like things of earth.

Night is the time to watch;
O'er ocean's dark expanse,
To hail the Pleiades, or catch
The full moon's earliest glance,
That brings into the home-sick mind
All we have loved and left behind.

Night is the time for care;
Brooding on hours mispent,
To see the spectre of Despair,
Come to our lonely tent;
Like Brutus, 'midst his slumbering host,
Summon'd to die by Cæsar's ghost.

Night is the time to think;
When, from the eye, the soul
Takes flight, and, on the utmost brink
Of yonder starry pole,
Discerns beyond the abyss of night
The dawn of uncreated light.

Night is the time to pray;
Our Saviour oft withdrew
To desert mountains far away;
So will his follower do,
Steal from the throng to haunts untrod,
And commune there alone with God.

Night is the time for Death;
When all around is peace,
Calmly to yield the weary breath,
From sin and suffering cease,
Think of heaven's bliss, and give the sign
To parting friends; — such death be mine.

MEET AGAIN! *

JOYFUL words, — we meet again!
Love's own language, comfort darting
Through the souls of friends at parting:
Life in death, — we meet again!

While we walk this vale of tears,
Compass'd round with care and sorrow,
Gloom to-day, and storm to-morrow,
" Meet again!" our bosom cheers.

* The seven following pieces were written for " Select foreign Airs," published some time ago under the title of " *Polyhymnia*," which will account for the peculiar rhythm adopted in several of them. The four first were paraphrased from the German; the words of the remaining three are original.

Far in exile, when we roam,
O'er our lost endearments weeping,
Lonely, silent vigils keeping,
"Meet again!" transports us home.

When this weary world is past,
Happy they, whose spirits soaring,
Vast eternity exploring,
"Meet again" in heaven at last.

VIA CRUCIS, VIA LUCIS.

NIGHT turns to day: —

When sullen darkness lowers,
And heaven and earth are hid from sight,
Cheer up, cheer up;
Ere long the opening flowers,
With dewy eyes, shall shine in light.

Storms die in calms: —

When over land and ocean
Roll the loud chariots of the wind,
Cheer up, cheer up;
The voice of wild commotion
Proclaims tranquillity behind.

Winter wakes spring: —

When icy blasts are blowing
O'er frozen lakes, through naked trees,
Cheer up, cheer up;
All beautiful and glowing,
May floats in fragrance on the breeze.

War ends in peace: —

Though dread artillery rattle,
And ghastly corses load the ground,
Cheer up, cheer up;
Where groan'd the field of battle,
The song, the dance, the feast go round.

Toil brings repose: —

With noontide fervours beating,
When droop thy temples o'er thy breast,
Cheer up, cheer up;
Grey twilight, cool and fleeting,
Wafts on its wing the hour of rest.

Death springs to life: —

Though brief and sad thy story,
Thy years all spent in care and gloom,
Look up, look up;
Eternity and glory
Dawn through the portals of the tomb.

BRANCH OF THE ATLANTIC SOC

THE PILGRIM.

How blest the Pilgrim, who in trouble
Can lean upon a bosom-friend;
Strength, courage, hope with him redouble,
When foes assail, or griefs impend;
Care flees before his footsteps, straying,
At daybreak, o'er the purple heath;
He plucks the wild flowers round him playing,
And binds their beauty in a wreath.

More dear to him the fields and mountains,
When with his friend abroad he roves,
Rests in the shade near sunny fountains,
Or talks by moonlight through the groves:

For him the vine expands its clusters,
Spring wakes for him her woodland quire ;
Yea, when the storm of winter blusters,
'Tis summer round his evening fire.

In good old age serenely dying,
When all he loved forsakes his view,
Sweet is affection's voice replying,
" I follow soon," to his " Adieu !"
Even then, though earthly ties are riven,
The spirit's union will not end ;
— Happy the man, whom Heaven hath given,
In life and death, a faithful friend.

GERMAN WAR SONG.

HEAVEN speed the righteous sword,
And freedom be the word!
Come, brethren, hand in hand,
Fight for your father-land.

Germania from afar
Invokes her sons to war;
Awake, put forth your powers
And victory must be ours.

* The simple and sublime original of these stanzas, with the fine air by Himmel, became the national song of Germany, and was sung by the soldiers especially, during the latter campaigns of the war, when Buonaparte was twice dethroned, and Europe finally delivered from French predominance.

On to the combat, on!
Go where your sires have gone:
Their might unspent remains,
Their pulse is in our veins.

On to the battle, on!
Rest will be sweet anon;
The slave may yield, may fly,
We conquer, or we die.

O Liberty! thy form
Shines through the battle-storm;
Away with fear, away,
Let justice win the day.

REMINISCENCES.

WHERE are ye with whom in life I started,
Dear companions of my golden days?
Ye are dead, estranged from me, or parted,
— Flown, like morning clouds, a thousand ways.

Where art thou, in youth my friend and brother,
Yea, in soul my friend and brother still?
Heaven received thee, and on earth none other
Can the void in my lorn bosom fill.

Where is she, whose looks were love and gladness?
— Love and gladness I no longer see!
She is gone; and since that hour of sadness,
Nature seems her sepulchre to me.

Where am I? — life's current faintly flowing
Brings the welcome warning of release;
Struck with death, ah! whither am I going?
All is well, — my spirit parts in peace.

THE AGES OF MAN.

YOUTH, fond youth! to thee in life's gay morning,
New and wonderful are heaven and earth;
Health the hills, content the fields adorning,
Nature rings with melody and mirth;
Love invisible, beneath, above,
Conquers all things; all things yield to love.

Time, swift time, from years their mution stealing,
Unperceived hath sober manhood brought;
Truth, her pure and humble forms revealing,
Peoples fancy's fairy-land with thought;
Then the heart, no longer prone to roam,
Loves, loves best, the quiet bliss of home

Age, old age, in sickness, pain, and sorrow,
Creeps with lengthening shadow o'er the scene;
Life was yesterday, 'tis death to-morrow,
And to-day the agony between:
Then how longs the weary soul for thee,
Bright and beautiful eternity!

ASPIRATIONS OF YOUTH.

HIGHER, higher will we climb
Up the mount of glory,
That our names may live through time
In our country's story;
Happy, when her welfare calls,
He who conquers, he who falls.

Deeper, deeper let us toil
In the mines of knowledge;
Nature's wealth and learning's spoil
Win from school and college;
Delve we there for richer gems
Than the stars of diadems.

Onward, onward will we press
Through the path of duty;
Virtue is true happiness,
Excellence true beauty;
Minds are of supernal birth,
Let us make a heaven of earth.

Close and closer then we knit
Hearts and hands together,
Where our fire-side comforts sit
In the wildest weather:
Oh! they wander wide, who roam,
For the joys of life, from home.

Nearer, dearer bands of love
Draw our souls in union,
To our Father's house above,
To the saints' communion;
Thither every hope ascend,
There may all our labours end.

A HERMITAGE.

Whose is this humble dwelling-place,
The flat turf-roof with flowers o'ergrown?
Ah! here the tenant's name I trace,
Moss-cover'd, on the threshold stone.

Well, he has peace within and rest,
Though nought of all the world beside;
Yet, stranger, deem not him unblest,
Who knows not avarice, lust, or pride.

Nothing he asks, nothing he cares
For all that tempts or troubles round;
He craves no feast, no finery wears,
Nor once o'ersteps his narrow bound.

No need of light, though all be gloom,
To cheer his eye, — that eye is blind;
No need of fire in this small room,
He recks not tempest, rain, or wind.

No gay companion here; no wife
To gladden home with true-love smiles;
No children, — from the woes of life,
To win him with their artless wiles.

Nor joy, nor sorrow, enter here,
Nor throbbing heart, nor aching limb;
No sun, no moon, no stars appear,
And man and brute are nought to him.

This dwelling is a hermit's cave,
With space alone for one poor bed;
This dwelling is a mortal's grave,
Its sole inhabitant is dead.

THE FALLING LEAF.

WERE I a trembling leaf,
On yonder stately tree,
After a season gay and brief,
Condemn'd to fade and flee:

I should be loth to fall
Beside the common way,
Weltering in mire, and spurn'd by all,
Till trodden down to clay.

Nor would I choose to die
All on a bed of grass,
Where thousands of my kindred lie,
And idly rot in mass.

Nor would I like to spread
My thin and wither'd face
In *hortus siccus*, pale and dead,
A mummy of my race.

No, — on the wings of air
Might I be left to fly,
I know not and I heed not where,
A waïf of earth and sky!

Or flung upon the stream,
Curl'd like a fairy-boat,
As through the changes of a dream,
To the world's end to float!

Who that hath ever been,
Could bear to be no more?
Yet who would tread again the scene,
He trod through life before?

On, with intense desire,
Man's spirit will move on;
It seems to die, yet, like heaven's fire,
It is not quench'd, but gone.

ON PLANTING A TULIP-ROOT.

HERE lies a bulb, the child of earth,
Buried alive beneath the clod,
Ere long to spring, by second birth,
A new and nobler work of God.

'Tis said that microscopic power
Might through its swaddling folds descry
The infant-image of the flower,
Too exquisite to meet the eye.

This, vernal suns and rains will swell,
Till from its dark abode it peep,
Like Venus rising from her shell,
Amidst the spring-tide of the deep.

Two shapely leaves will first unfold,
Then, on a smooth elastic stem,
The verdant bud shall turn to gold,
And open in a diadem.

Not one of Flora's brilliant race
A form more perfect can display;
Art could not feign more simple grace,
Nor Nature take a line away.

Yet, rich as morn of many a hue,
When flushing clouds through darkness strike,
The tulip's petals shine in dew,
All beautiful, — but none alike.

Kings, on their bridal, might unrobe
To lay their glories at its foot;
And queens their sceptre, crown, and globe,
Exchange for blossom, stalk, and root.

Here could I stand and moralise;
Lady, I leave that part to thee;
Be thy next birth in Paradise,
Thy life to come eternity.

THE ADVENTURE OF A STAR.

Addressed to a Young Lady.

A STAR would be a flower;
So down from heaven it came,
And in a honeysuckle bower
Lit up its little flame.
There on a bank, beneath the shade,
By sprays, and leaves, and blossoms made,
It overlook'd the garden-ground,
— A landscape stretching ten yards round;
O what a change of place
From gazing through the' eternity of space!

Gay plants on every side
Unclosed their lovely blooms,
And scatter'd far and wide
Their ravishing perfumes:

The butterfly, the bee,
And many an insect on the wing,
Full of the spirit of the spring,
Flew round and round in endless glee,
Alighting here, ascending there,
Ranging and revelling every where.

Now all the flowers were up and drest
In robes of rainbow-colour'd light;
The pale primroses look'd their best,
Peonies blush'd with all their might;
Dutch tulips from their beds
Flaunted their stately heads;
Auriculas, like belles and beaux,
Glittering with birthnight splendour rose;
And polyanthuses display'd
The brilliance of their gold brocade:
Here hyacinths of heavenly blue
Shook their rich tresses to the morn,
While rose-buds scarcely show'd their hue,

But coyly linger'd on the thorn,
Till their loved nightingale, who tarried long,
Should wake them into beauty with his song.
The violets were past their prime,
Yet their departing breath
Was sweeter, in the blast of death,
Than all the lavish fragrance of the time.

Amidst this gorgeous train,
Our truant star shone forth in vain;
Though in a wreath of periwinkle,
Through whose fine gloom it strove to twinkle,
It seem'd no bigger to the view
Than the light spangle in a drop of dew.
— Astronomers may shake their polls,
And tell me, — every orb that rolls
Through heaven's sublime expanse
Is sun or world, whose speed and size
Confound the stretch of mortal eyes,
In Nature's mystic dance:

It may be so
For aught I know,
Or aught indeed that they can show;
Yet till they prove what they aver,
From this plain truth I will not stir,
— A star's a star! — but when I think
Of sun or world, the star I sink;
Wherefore in verse, at least in mine,
Stars like themselves, in spite of fate, shall shine.

Now, to return (for we have wander'd far)
To what was nothing but a simple star;
— Where all was jollity around,
No fellowship the stranger found.
Those lowliest children of the earth,
That never leave their mother's lap,
Companions in their harmless mirth,
Were smiling, blushing, dancing there,
Feasting on dew, and light, and air,
And fearing no mishap,

Save from the hand of lady fair,
Who, on her wonted walk,
Pluck'd one and then another,
A sister or a brother,
From its elastic stalk;
Happy, no doubt, for one sharp pang, to die
On her sweet bosom, withering in her eye.

Thus all day long that star's hard lot,
While bliss and beauty ran to waste,
Was but to witness on the spot
Beauty and bliss it could not taste.
At length the sun went down, and then
Its faded glory came again,
With brighter, bolder, purer light,
It kindled through the deepening night,
Till the green bower, so dim by day,
Glow'd like a fairy-palace with its beams;
In vain, for sleep on all the borders lay,
The flowers were laughing in the land of dreams.

Our star, in melancholy state,
Still sigh'd to find itself alone,
Neglected, cold, and desolate,
Unknowing and unknown.
Lifting at last an anxious eye,
It saw that circlet empty in the sky,
Where it was wont to roll
Within a hair-breadth of the pole:
In that same instant, sore amazed,
On the strange blank all Nature gazed;
Travellers, bewilder'd for their guide,
In glens and forests lost their way;
And ships, on ocean's trackless tide,
Went fearfully astray.
The star, now wiser for its folly, knew
Its duty, dignity, and bliss at home;
So up to heaven again it flew,
Resolved no more to roam.

One hint the humble bard may send
To her for whom these lines are penn'd:
— O may it be enough for her
To shine in her own character!
O may she be content to grace,
On earth, in heaven, her proper place!

A WORD WITH MYSELF.

Stanzas written for "The Chimney-Sweeper's Friend," a work edited by the Author, and dedicated, by permission, to His most gracious Majesty George IV.

I KNOW they scorn the climbing boy,
The gay, the selfish, and the proud;
I know his villanous employ
Is mockery with the thoughtless crowd.

So be it; brand with every name
Of burning infamy his art;
But let his *country* bear the shame,
And feel the iron at her heart.

I cannot coldly pass him by,
Stript, wounded, left by thieves half dead;
Nor see an infant Lazarus lie
At rich men's gates imploring bread.

A frame as sensitive as mine,
Limbs moulded in a kindred form,
A soul degraded, yet divine,
Endear to me my brother-worm.

He was my equal at his birth,
A naked, helpless, weeping child;
— And such are born to thrones on earth;
On such hath every mother smiled.

My equal he will be again,
Down in that cold oblivious gloom,
Where all the prostrate ranks of men
Crowd, without fellowship, the tomb.

My equal in the judgment-day,
He shall stand up before the throne,
When every veil is rent away,
And good and evil only known.

And is he not mine equal now?
Am I less fall'n from God and truth?
Though "*wretch*" be written on his brow,
And leprosy consume his youth.

If holy Nature yet have laws
Binding on man, of woman born,
In her own court I'll plead his cause,
Arrest the doom, or share the scorn.

Yes, let the scorn, that haunts his course,
Turn on me like a trodden snake,
And hiss, and sting me with remorse,
If I the fatherless forsake!

INSCRIPTION

UNDER THE PICTURE OF AN AGED NEGRO-WOMAN.

ART thou a *woman?* — so am I; and all
That woman can be, I have been, or am;
A daughter, sister, consort, mother, widow.
Whiche'er of these *thou* art, O be the friend
Of one who is what thou canst never be!
Look on thyself, thy kindred, home, and country,
Then fall upon thy knees, and cry "Thank God,
An English woman cannot be A SLAVE!"

Art thou a *man?*—Oh! I have known, have loved,
And lost, all that to woman man can be;
A father, brother, husband, son, who shared
My bliss in freedom, and my woe in bondage.

— A childless widow now, a friendless slave,
What shall I ask of thee, since I have nought
To lose but life's sad burthen; nought to gain
But heaven's repose?—these are beyond thy power;
Me thou canst neither wrong nor help;—what then?
Go to the bosom of thy family,
Gather thy little children round thy knees,
Gaze on their innocence; their clear, full eyes,
All fix'd on thine; and in their mother, mark
The loveliest look that woman's face can wear,
Her look of love, beholding them and thee:
Then, at the altar of your household joys,
Vow one by one, vow all together, vow
With heart and voice, eternal enmity
Against oppression by your brethren's hands;
Till man nor woman under Britain's laws,
Nor son nor daughter born within her empire,
Shall buy, or sell, or hold, or be a slave.

THOUGHTS AND IMAGES.

"Come like shadows, so depart." *Macbeth.*

THE Diamond, in its native bed,
Hid like a buried star may lie,
Where foot of man must never tread,
Seen only by its Maker's eye:
And though imbued with beams to grace
His fairest work in woman's face,
Darkling, its fire may fill the void,
Where fix'd at first in solid night;
Nor, till the world shall be destroy'd,
Sparkle one moment into light.

The Plant, upspringing from the seed,
Expands into a perfect flower;

The virgin-daughter of the mead,
Wooed by the sun, the wind, the shower:
In loveliness beyond compare,
It toils not, spins not, knows no care
Train'd by the secret hand, that brings
All beauty out of waste and rude,
It blooms its season, dies, and flings
Its germs abroad in solitude.

Almighty skill, in ocean's caves,
Lends the light Nautilus a form
To tilt along the Atlantic waves,
Fearless of rock, or shoal, or storm;
But, should a breath of danger sound,
With sails quick-furl'd it dives profound,
And far beneath the tempest's path,
In coral grots, defies the foe,
That never brake, in heaviest wrath,
The sabbath of the deep below.

Up from his dream, on twinkling wings,
The Sky-lark soars amid the dawn;
Yet, while in Paradise he sings,
Looks down upon the quiet lawn,
Where flutters, in his little nest,
More love than music e'er express'd:
Then, though the nightingale may thrill
The soul with keener ecstasy,
The merry bird of morn can fill
All Nature's bosom with his glee.

The Elephant, embower'd in woods,
Coeval with their trees might seem,
As though he drank from Indian floods
Life in a renovating stream;
Ages o'er him have come and fled,
Midst generations of the dead,
His bulk survives, to feed and range,
Where ranged and fed of old his sires;

Nor knows advancement, lapse, or change,
Beyond their walks, till he expires.

Gem, flower, and fish, the bird, the brute,
Of every kind occult or known
(Each exquisitely form'd to suit
Its humble lot, and that alone),
Through ocean, earth, and air fulfil,
Unconsciously, their Maker's will,
Who gave, without their toil or thought,
Strength, beauty, instinct, courage, speed;
While through the whole his pleasure wrought
Whate'er his wisdom had decreed.

But Man, the master-piece of God,
Man, in his Maker's image framed, —
Though kindred to the valley's clod,
Lord of this low creation named, —
In naked helplessness appears,
Child of a thousand griefs and fears:

To labour, pain, and trouble born,
Weapon, nor wing, nor sleight hath he;
Yet, like the sun, he brings his morn,
And is a king from infancy.

For, him no destiny hath bound
To do what others did before,
Pace the same dull perennial round,
And be a man, and be no more:
A man? — a self-will'd piece of earth,
Just as the lion is, by birth;
To hunt his prey, to wake, to sleep,
His father's joys and sorrows share,
His niche in Nature's temple keep,
And leave his likeness in his heir! —

No; infinite the shades between
The motley millions of our race;
No two, the changing moon hath seen
Alike in purpose, or in face;

Yet all aspire beyond their fate;
The least, the meanest would be great;
The mighty future fills the mind,
That pants for more than earth can give:
Man, to this narrow sphere confined,
Dies when he but begins to live.

Oh! if there be no world on high
To yield his powers unfetter'd scope;
If man be only born to die,
Whence this inheritance of hope?
Wherefore to him alone were lent
Riches that never can be spent?
Enough, not more, to all the rest,
For life and happiness, was given;
To man, mysteriously unblest,
Too much for any state but heaven.

It is not thus; — it cannot be,
That one so gloriously endow'd

With views that reach eternity,
Should shine and vanish like a cloud:
Is there a God? — all Nature shows
There *is*, — and yet no *mortal* knows:
The mind that could this truth conceive,
Which brute sensation never taught,
No longer to the dust would cleave,
But grow immortal with the thought.

THE END.

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